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19,712 pass latest nurses' test; results on Inquirer website

ENTERTAINMENT / E1

American Idol's Randy Jackson looks forward to new 'dogg pound'

BUSINESS / B2-1

MBA graduates have functional skills but firms look for leadership

METRO / A25

Leviste aide was shot not once but several times, say officials

Jayben P. Matamis tops nurses' exam, 43 others share Top 10

THE TOP 10 SUCCESSFUL NURSING EXAMINEES are:

1. Jayben Perez Matamis, 88.60.
2. Dervid Santos Jungco , Joanna Pauline Henson Lao, 88.20.
3. Maria Sophia Francesca Dimacali Cruz, 87.80
4. Ma. Lucia Gaitan Iglesias, Baby Nellie

JAYBEN/ A6

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Monday, January 15, 2007 ★★★ 7 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 38 P18 website: inquirer.net

Canadian sitcom shows funny side of Muslims

TORONTO—THE CREATORS OF A NEW CANAdian sitcom, "Little Mosque on the Prairie," are hoping the TV show will strike a chord beyond the country's borders as it portrays Muslims in a new light—funny.

The comedy, about a small Muslim community in the fictional Prairie town of Mercy, aired on Canadian television this week to mostly favor-

CANADIAN/ A22

TRADE DEAL: Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaozing (front, left) and Philippine Trade Secretary Peter Favila shake hands as they exchange documents on Asean-China trade during a signing ceremony at the 12th Asean Summit in Cebu. Witnessing the signing are Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and Philippine President Arroyo. AP

TRILATERAL MEET. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao (center) smiles warmly as he welcomes South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun (left) and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe before their three-country "trilateral" meeting on the sidelines of the 12th Asean Summit of Leaders and its Dialogue Partners in Cebu. AP

China, Asean move closer to free trade

Region rising as formidable bloc–GMA

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Volt Contreras

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo yesterday expressed satisfaction at the outcome of the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations Summit and said the region was on the road to becoming a formidable bloc building millions of secure and prosperous communities from East to West.

Fueling the President's optimism was the signing of a free trade pact with China at the start yesterday of the 10 Asean leaders's two-day meetings with each of six regional counterparts that also welcomed India's "Look East" policy and urged North Korea to abandon its nuclear ambitions.

The agreement between China and Asean, a key market for Chinese manufacturers as well as a source for energy, calls for improved market access and a higher level of investment in the region, especially in computer-related services, real estate, construction and energy services.

The meetings came a day after Asean completed its own annual gathering of leaders, vowing to strengthen political solidarity, fight terrorism and create a free trade zone by 2015.

"For all of Asean's great efforts, it is payback time for a region whose legacy to its

CHINA/ A20

More stories on Pages A4, A13, A20

Energy security tops agenda of East Asian leaders' meet

By Volt Contreras

CEBU—WITH THE TWO-DAY 12TH Asean Summit over, the larger East Asia Summit (EAS) opens here today with the Philippines having the call as host to set the agenda: How 16 neighboring countries can cooperate to ensure energy security.

For about seven hours, leaders from the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations and dialogue partners Australia, China, Japan, South Korea, India and New Zealand will be meeting only for the second time in the EAS.

The inaugural EAS was held in Kuala Lumpur in December 2005, also as an adjunct to the Asean summit chaired by Malaysia.

The EAS serves more as a "forum" and not really as an organization, and countries attending it are more accurately referred to as "participants" rather than "members," a Filipino diplomat explained to the INQUIRER.

EAS commitments are thus made in broader strokes and with long-term strategies in mind, compared to the more specific or immediately functional initiatives of the Asean, the official added.

President Macapagal-Arroyo will open the EAS at 9 p.m. at the Cebu In-

ENERGY/ A12

GMA calls for release of Suu Kyi

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

CEBU—WITH SOUTHEAST ASIAN LEADers asserting primary responsibility for handling Burma (Myanmar), President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday urged Burmese military leaders to free opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and take "concrete" steps toward democracy.

Ms Arroyo, during a closed-door meeting with Burmese Prime Minister Soe Win on the sidelines of the Asean summit Saturday, expressed the hope the extension of Suu Kyi's house arrest in May last year "would be the last."

She said Burma's engagement with United Nations envoy Ibrahim Gambari was encouraging but such visits must yield "more concrete and meaningful results" in the future.

Her comments to Soe Win, as reported in a document made available to reporters, were stronger than the official position of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

In their post-summit statement, Asean leaders encouraged fellow member Bur-

GMA CALLS/ A12

"SINULOG" festival dancers perform in front of the Magellan Shrine for the visiting spouses of the Asean country leaders who are attending a summit in Cebu.

JUNJIE MENDOZA/CEBU DAILY NEWS

Capiz sees potential market in China

WHILE SHOPPING CENTERS IN Cebu stock Chinese products ranging from toys to television sets and clothes to calculators, entrepreneurs in Capiz have found China a potential market for their cut foliage, coconut products and milkfish.

Trade between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) has surged, totaling $160.8 billion last year, a 23-percent rise over 2005, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao said yesterday.

The full-year 2005 figure of $130.4 billion was roughly 16 times that of 1991.

Wen was speaking at a summit with Asean in which the two sides signed an agreement set to give another boost to economic exchanges.

In July, China will open its lucrative services sector to Southeast Asian firms in sectors that include energy, telecommunications, real estate and information technology.

"This marks a key step forward for the establishment of a China-Asean free trade area," Wen told Asean leaders before the signing.

The free trade zone—which would be the world's biggest, covering nearly 2 billion people—is set to come into force in 2010.

"This should round out the liber-

CAPIZ/ A20

Public bidding urged in ₱930-M AFP radio deal

AN ANTICORRUPTION COALITION HAS urged the Department of National Defense to conduct a public bidding for the purchase of 12,046 VHF/FM radios worth P930.8 million under the Armed Forces of the Philippines Modernization Program.

The Coalition Against Corruption (CAC), a regular observer of biddings at the DND, submitted its proposal on Jan. 11 to Defense Assistant Secretary Roberto Nuqui, chair of the DND bids and awards committee.

The proposal came after an INQUIRER special report said that the purchase of the radios had been stalled for three years and had adversely affected field communications because the DND and AFP still had to resolve whether to buy them by direct contracting or by a public bidding.

The CAC is composed of business and Church groups and several nongovernment organizations, and is headed by former Central Bank Governor Jose L. Cuisia.

The Government Procurement Policy Board earlier recommended that the radios be bought through public bidding. However, the AFP, now under Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, has stood firm on direct contracting.

The DND's defense acquisition committee and its bids and awards commit-

PUBLIC BIDDING/ A6

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern and Southern Luzon will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers while Visayas and Mindanao will have cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms becoming widespread rains over the eastern sections. The rest of the country will be mostly cloudy with light rains.

COMPILED BY KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/01/14/07 SOURCE: PAGASA

Second FRONT PAGE

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Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rains	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Cloudy with Rains	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Palace said backing Chavit for Senate

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE COUNTRY'S GOVERNORS AND MAYORS are aggressively pushing for the senatorial bid of controversial Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson, whose inclusion in the administration slate is reportedly being given serious thought by Malacañang.

Eastern Samar Gov. Ben Evardone, in an interview with the INQUIRER, said local government officials were out to prove that their growing influence on national politics was "no fluke."

"We showed how potent local government officials were in helping the President ride through the storm of her political crisis. We want to show in the elections that a united front of governors and mayors can also play kingmaker by campaigning for one of our own in the senatorial race," Evardone said.

During the meeting of the League of Provinces of the Philippines (LPP) on Friday, Evardone said, the 82 members unanimously called for their chair, Singson, to join the administration's senatorial slate.

SINGSON INQUIRER PHOTO

Singson, however, said he had yet to make up his mind about running and doing battle against senatorial bets handpicked by his former ally, ousted President Joseph Estrada.

Malacañang quickly showed its interest in taking in one of the most powerful local government officials on the administration ticket. The lineup is deemed the underdog in the coming polls as recent mock polls showed the administration bets will be whipped by likely opposition candidates.

In a text message to the INQUIRER, Presidential Adviser on Political Affairs Gabriel Claudio said: "Governor Singson carries a long and rich, not to mention colorful, experience in local governance that may be tapped as a vital reference point for legislative deliberations and actions in the Senate.

"Chavit can effectively articulate and represent the sentiments of local government units and officials nationwide, particularly those from the countryside."

Claudio added: "I believe he can be a significant asset to the Senate. His inclusion in the lineup is being given serious consideration by the leadership of the administration coalition which is in close consultation with him and will also take into account his own personal preferences on the matter. The final ticket will be decided or ratified by the administration coalition which consists of several political parties.

He also acknowledged the role played by local government officials in the Arroyo administration.

"The opposition should not doubt or wonder about the administration's confidence of victory in the senatorial polls nor should they continue deluding themselves about their own diminishing chances," said Claudio.

Evardone said the governors and mayors could be the deciding factor in the midterm elections, adding that he believed that most incumbents were a cinch to retain their posts and that they would likely spend more time campaigning for candidates for Congress.

With governors and mayors opting to focus their resources on the coming elections, Evardone said, the LPP voted to call for the deferment of moves to change the Constitution until after May.

Be discerning of poll candidates, CBCP head urges faithful

By Chrisitian V. Esguerra

THE HEAD OF THE CATHOLIC Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) yesterday urged the faithful to be "watchful and vigilant" now that the election season culminating in May had officially begun.

"People should be watchful and vigilant. There should be more discernment," Archbishop Angel Lagdameo said in an interview with the Church-run Radio Veritas.

The Jaro, Iloilo, prelate called on the faithful to initiate discussions that would incisively look at the candidates. He said this method would help voters determine if those seeking public positions would really work "for the good of the country."

The CBCP will also release a set of guidelines during its plenary assembly later this month. The new document will cover areas such as "voter attitude and what to do in light of the elections."

The plenary assembly, which is held twice a year, will officially begin with a seminar on Jan. 23 culminating with a meeting on Jan. 28. The gathering will also allow the different commissions of the CBCP to update the entire body on their individual programs and concerns.

Another prelate expressed concern on the possibility of "jueteng" money again being used in the coming elections.

"It is an open secret that elections in this country are anything but altogether honest, orderly and peaceful," lamented Archbishop Oscar Cruz, head of the advocacy group Krusadang Bayan Laban sa Jueteng.

The Lingayen-Dagupan prelate vowed to fight against candidates who were known protectors, if not operators, of the multimillion-peso illegal numbers game industry.

"Jueteng money bribes some election officials, pays for campaign expenses, buys votes," he said. "[It] takes away votes from honest and upright candidates and credits votes in favor of corrupt and corrupting pretenders for public office."

Cruz earlier said his group would go to the extent of actually campaigning against candidates with known links to the underground lottery business.

"It is not enough that these individuals are already well known by the general public," he wrote yesterday in his web blog. "It is necessary for the antijueteng crusade to have them well marked."

Cruz said the group would also tell the public which candidates are against jueteng and "fit for the tenure of public offices."

Ex-CJ Davide named RP envoy to United Nations

By Volt Contreras
and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

CEBU—A RETIRED SUPREME Court Chief Justice and favorite son of this province took his oath yesterday as the country's new Permanent Representative to the United Nations, grabbing some of the limelight in the ongoing 12th Asean Summit here.

Hilario Davide Jr. was sworn into the plum diplomatic post by President Macapagal-Arroyo, summit spokesperson Vic Lecaros announced in a briefing.

The 71-year-old Davide, whose appointment has yet to be confirmed by Congress, is set to succeed Lauro Baja, also a political appointee who has held the post in New York since May 2003.

The oath-taking ceremony was held shortly after Ms Arroyo emerged from the Asean-South Korea meeting at the Shangri-La Mactan, Lecaros added.

In an interview with reporters yesterday, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said Davide was "very qualified" for the job.

"There is no question about his qualification. In 1986, another former Chief Justice, Claudio Teehankee, was appointed Permanent Representative to the UN and he served up to 1988. He (Davide) is very qualified just like the late Justice Teehankee. His presence will enhance the national interest in the UN," Ermita said.

Opposition slate may see Erap, Cory sons together

By Michael Lim Ubac
and TJ Burgonio

WITH ONLY ONE OR TWO slots still up in the air, the political opposition hopes to announce a unified 12-man senatorial ticket this week which will see the son of deposed President Joseph Estrada together with the son of former President Corazon Aquino running together against the Arroyo administration.

According to House Deputy Minority Leader Alan Peter Cayetano, the common candidates in the short lists being drawn up by the United Opposition (UNO) and the Senate's Third Force are: Senate President Manuel Villar, Senators Francis Pangilinan, Ralph Recto, Panfilo Lacson and Edgardo Angara, House Minority Leader Francis Escudero, Representatives Cayetano and Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III, former Senators Loren Legarda and Tito Sotto, and San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito.

The 12th slot is still subject to hard backroom negotiations. Cayetano said it could go to former Sen. John Osmeña due to a "personal commitment" by Estrada, the de facto leader of UNO.

"These are the candidates that seem to be common," said Cayetano, explaining that reelectionist senators were prioritized because of the principle of "equity of the incumbent."

Cayetano admitted that problems may still arise if opposition candidates that were not included in the magic 12 decided to run, referring to Sen. Joker Arroyo and former senator and Vice President Teofisto Guingona III.

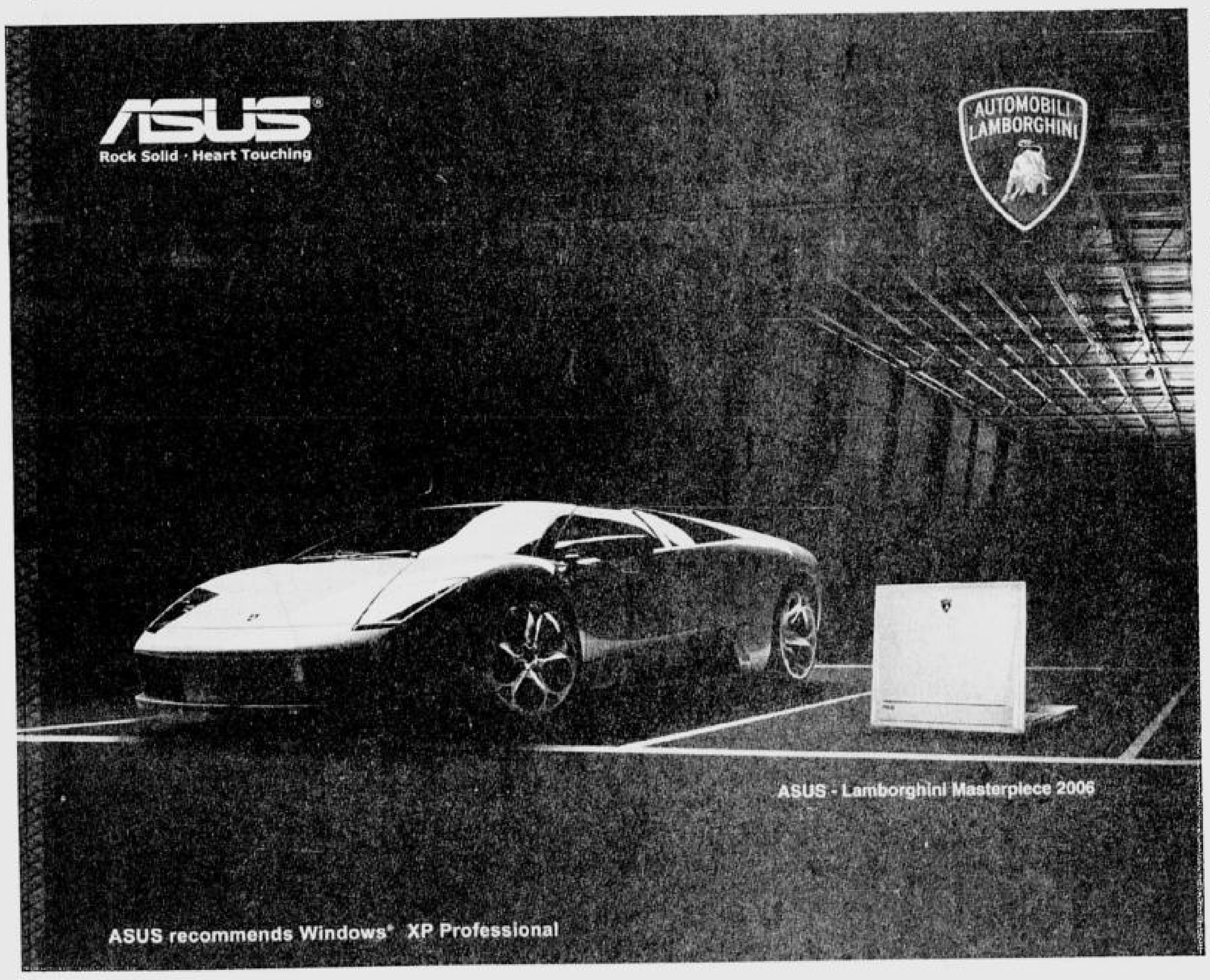
"There will be an inside problem if Joker runs because everyone agrees that he should be on the slate," said Cayetano. "Guingona is not hot about running but room will be made for him if he also decides to run."

The early losers in the opposition primary are former Senators Francisco "Kit" Tatad, Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan and actor Richard Gomez.

With the inclusion of Aquino and Ejercito in the slate, it's apparent that former Sen. Tessie Aquino-Oreta and Sen. Luisa "Loi" Ejercito have given way to their much younger kin.

Sen. Luisa "Loi" Ejercito Estrada confirmed she isn't seeking a second term. "The President doesn't want me to run anymore. In fact, he had once remarked that he'd rather have me as his caregiver," she said in an interview last Friday.

The low-profile former first lady, 76, has calmly accepted her husband's decision. "Whatever he wants for me, that's fine by me. I won't be where I am now if not for him. It was his idea that I run for senator then. Besides, as he had indicated, I'll be spending more time with him when I'm out of the Senate," she said.



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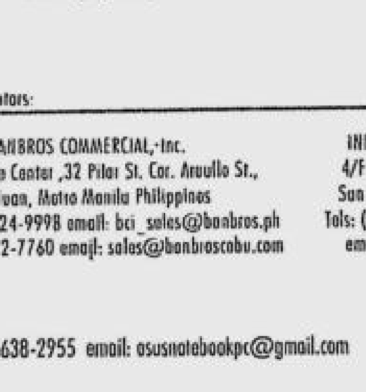


Defensor: I can roll with punches

HIS PROPOSAL TO SEEK TEMPORARY freedom for deposed President Joseph Estrada was criticized and ridiculed by his own allies but Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor will not back down or drop the subject.

Defensor said yesterday President Macapagal-Arroyo as well as religious and business leaders were supportive of his proposal to temporarily release Estrada from house arrest.

"I know I will be subject to ridicule and nasty comments but that's still my conviction," he said in a phone interview.

"I can roll with the punches," he added.

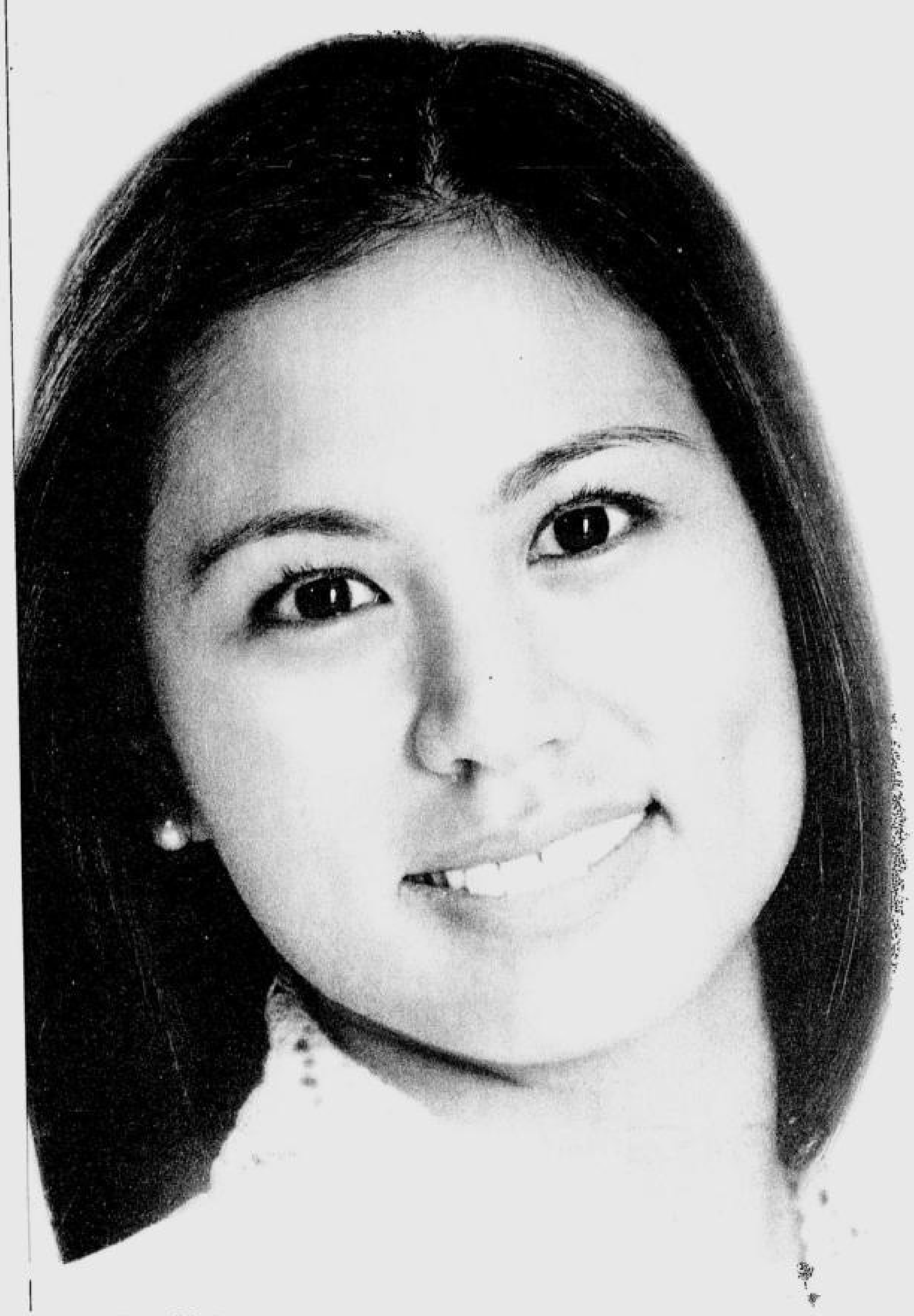
Allies of the Arroyo administration, including Estrada himself and Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, chided Defensor for proposing a matter that they said was best left to the courts to decide.

The other day, Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio joined the chorus, asking Defensor—who is supposedly running for senator—to stop raising the proposal for his own political ends.

Defensor denied raising the proposal because he was after the so-called Estrada vote in the coming elections.

He reiterated his belief that Estrada's continued detention was the "root" of the political bickerings and divisiveness in the country, which was affecting both the people and their leaders.

Reconciliation with Estrada was part of the 10-point agenda of President Arroyo, he noted. *Christine O. Avendaño*



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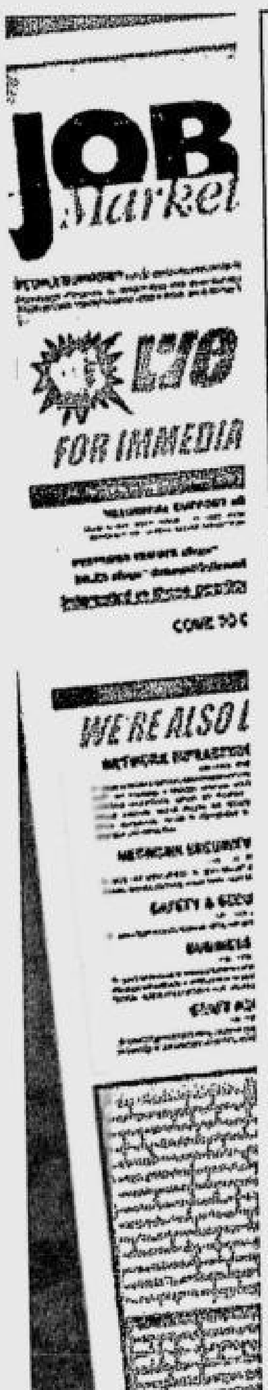

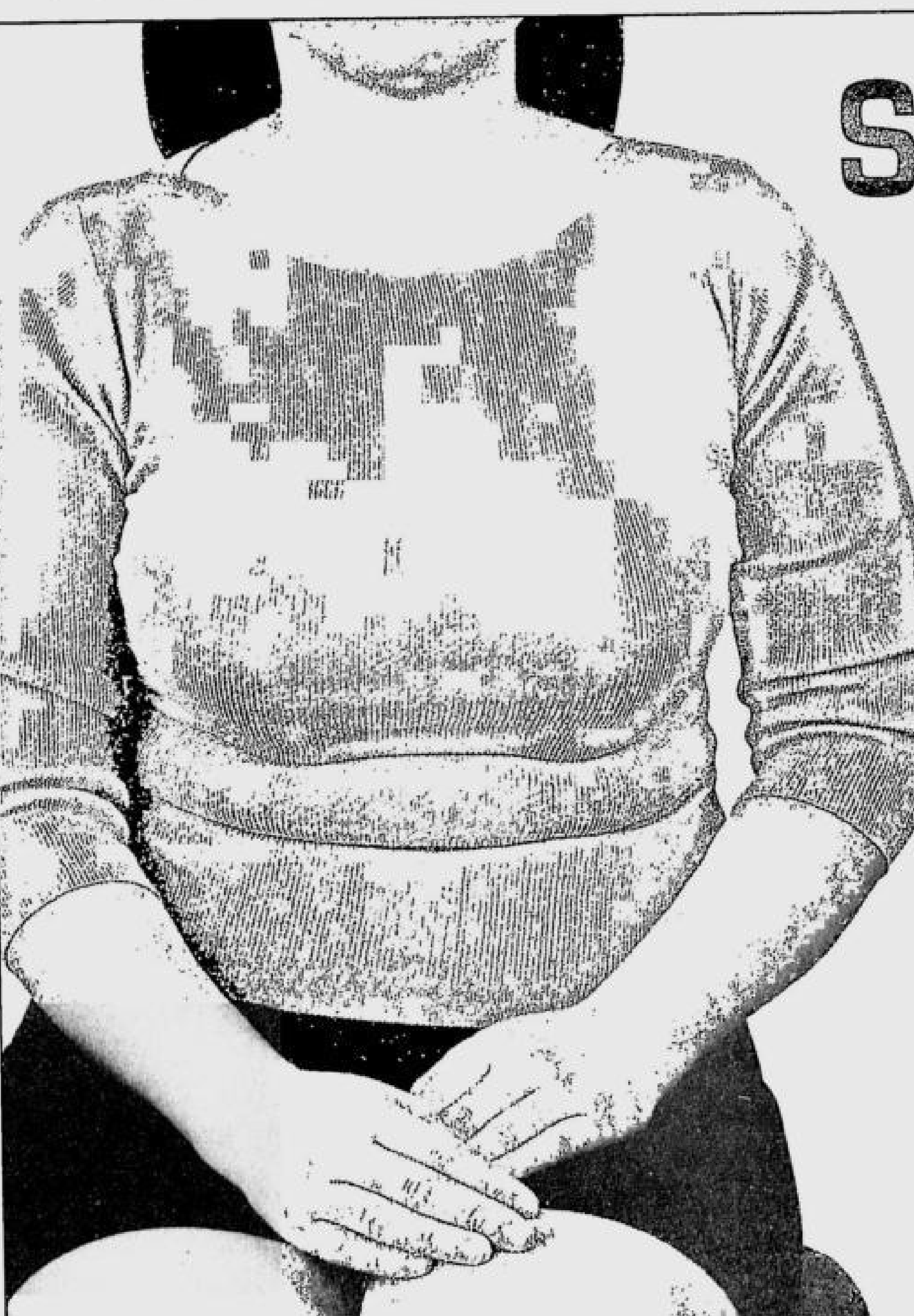

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Protesters, including kids, stopped near Asean venue

CEBU CITY—ONCE AGAIN, activists were stopped from staging a major protest here.

Some 30 militants, including children, swam yesterday in the Mactan Channel in an attempt to get close to the Shangri-La Mactan Resort and Spa, one of the venues of the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) Summit.

The activists were able to swim 300 meters from the shore of Barangay Tangke in Talisay City before they were prevented from going any further by heavily armed maritime police and members of the Philippine Coast Guard.

On the shore, some 200 fishermen staged their own protest, waving placards that read, "Junk the Asean antiterror pact," "Junk the Japan-Philippine economic partnership agreement," "Defend our seas," "Get the Philippine fisheries out of WTO," and "Justice for all victims of political killings."

Also yesterday, members of the party-list group Bayan Muna and allied groups such as the Panaghiusa sa Gagmayng Mananagat sa Sugbo (Pamana) took to the water and burned a flag of the United States, while several Coast Guard and maritime authorities watched from their own rubber boats.

Clemente Bautista, of the environment group Kalikasan Peoples Network for the Environment, said the symbolical protest was meant to oppose the signing of the Asean antiterrorism accord and support the call to trash the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA).

"We condemn the signing of the Asean peace accord because this would only lead to more political repression and political killings. We believe in junking the VFA because under that agreement, nuclear armaments are being allowed [to enter the Philippines]," he said.

Gerry Corpuz, Pamalakaya's information officer, said the VFA would allow the US to exploit the Philippines as its staging ground for war against the Asean people. "It is not an antiterrorist pact; it is a terrorist pact ... allowing the US to perform war exercises and engage in military intervention in the region."

Fernando Hicup, chair of Kalikasan and one of the 30 who swam off Tangke yesterday, said they would oppose economic agreements signed by Asean leaders that would benefit only a few and adversely affect the marginalized sectors. *Jolene R. Bulambot and Jhunnex Napallacan, Inquirer Visayas*

Spoiled food downs Asean dancers

CEBU CITY—NINETY-five dancers preparing to perform for Association of Southeast Asian Nation (Asean) and other Asian leaders last night were downed yesterday morning by food poisoning, but the show will go on, according to organizers.

The dancers were brought to three hospitals in Cebu City early yesterday morning complaining of stomach cramps, vomiting and diarrhea after they ate *palabok*, a Philippine seafood noodle dish, said Dr. Susana Madarieta, regional director of the Department of Health in Central Visayas (DOH 7).

The dancers were rehearsing last night at the Shangri-La Mactan in Lapu-Lapu City and were fed the meal for their dinner by an independent caterer. It was after midnight when the dancers, many of whom belonged to the famed Bayanihan Dance Troupe, started complaining of stomach pain, Madarieta said.

The dancers were to perform last night before the Asean heads of state at the Shangri-La Mactan Island Resort and Spa during the gala night, the end-of-activities program for the 12th Asean Summit, according to a source in the Cebu organizing committee.

Singers, led by Broadway star Lea Salonga, will serenade the VIPs with hits from "Les Miserables" and "Mulan" at the banquet, hosted by President Macapagal Arroyo. *Jhunnex Napallacan, Inquirer Visayas*

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Drilon: GMA bullying foes with dismissal

By TJ Burgonio

SEN. FRANKLIN DRILON YESTERDAY ACcused the Arroyo administration of "bullying" the opposition after the Department of the Interior and Local Government ordered the dismissal of a number of opposition local executives, including Iloilo Gov. Neil Tupas.

"This is even worse than martial law," Drilon, president of a Liberal Party faction, said in a statement defending Tupas, an ally. He said Tupas was being dismissed on graft charges without a formal investigation.

Tupas is a member of the LP National Executive Council, the party's highest policy-making body.

A DILG official had said the Ombudsman had also ordered the dismissal of suspended Pasay City Mayor "Peewee" Trinidad, nine other suspended Pasay officials and Jaen, Nueva Ecija, Mayor Prospero Esquivel on graft charges.

The Ombudsman also recommended the suspension of Batangas Gov. Armand Sanchez on similar charges.

THIS pyrotechnics display was put up by the Chinese team last night.

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United Kingdom wins World Pyro Olympics

TEAM UNITED Kingdom's spectacular fireworks display beat nine other countries to win the Grand Championship of the 2nd World Pyro Olympics held in Pasay City last week.

The international fireworks competition lit up the skies over Manila Bay on five separate nights from Jan. 5 to 13, and drew huge crowds to the reclaimed bay area and Roxas Boulevard.

The United Kingdom's entry was judged the best based on variety and quality of shells, audience impact, composition and choreography and overall design. Team UK, which presented its display Jan. 7, was composed of Matthew Spencer and Neil Ross representing Westcoast Fireworks.

China, the last competing country to fire up the skies Saturday night, was given a special award for technical excellence and precision. Team China was composed of Francis Wu, Sik Kong Ho, Kwek Teck Kee and Jeffrey Mou representing Glorious Fireworks group.

Other countries that participated in the 2nd World Pyro Olympics included Australia, Poland, the United States, Spain, Germany, Denmark and Canada.

The Philippines, represented by event organizer La Mancha Pyro Productions, was not a competitor but just the same wowed the crowd with its own world-class fireworks show at the end of the competition.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, January 15, 2007
2nd Week in Ordinary Time
1st Reading: Heb 5:1-10
Gospel: Mark 2:18-22

One day, when the disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees were fasting, some people asked Jesus, "Why is it that both the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but yours do not?" Jesus answered, "How can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the day will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them and on that day they will fast.

No one sews a piece of new cloth on an old coat, because the new patch will shrink and tear away from the old cloth, making a worse tear. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins, for the wine would burst the skins and then both the wine and the skins would be lost. But new wine, new skins!"

Commentary

Jesus offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to God, and God heard him because of his reverence. And he learned obedience through what he suffered—being human, limited, dying. His life/death was given for others and so he is the high priest. We are Jesus' disciples and we learn obedience in the same way. There is a time for feasting and a time for fasting; a time for reveling in the presence of the bridegroom Jesus who teaches, heals, touches, and eats with us; and a time for grieving his absence, when he is taken from us. But Jesus is the new cloth, the new wine, and this is the time of pouring new life into the earth and all peoples. Do we live so for others and live as the priests of God?

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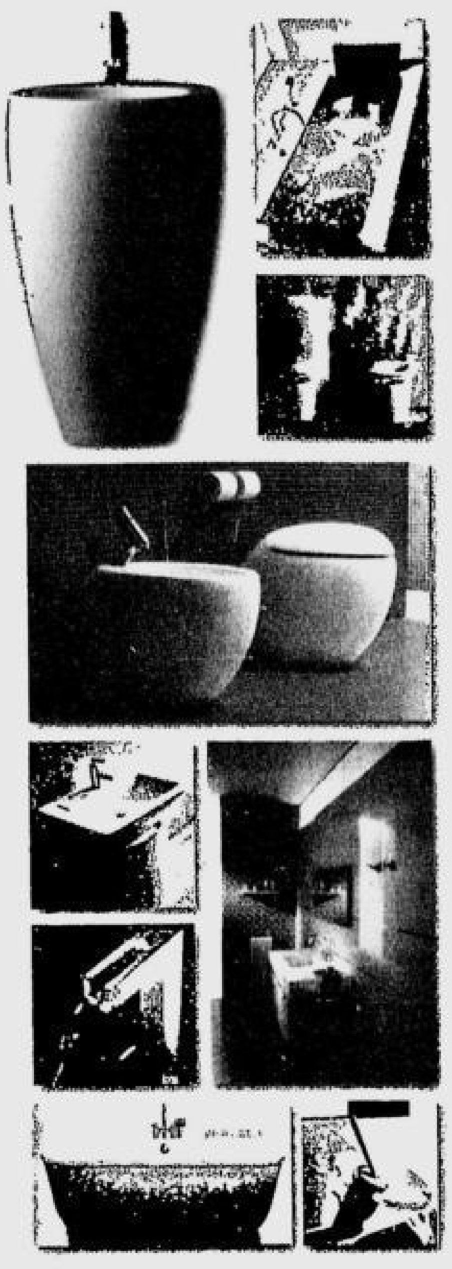

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Public bidding urged in ₱930-M AFP radio deal

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Closing date for online application : 28 February 2007

From page A1

tee had recommended to Avelino Cruz shortly before he resigned as defense secretary in November the purchase of the units through a negotiated procurement.

Scenarios

The CAC, through the Makati Business Club and Bishops-Businessmen's Conference, reiterated its June 1, 2005, position that a public bidding would enable the government to realize substantial savings.

While acknowledging the AFP's concern to ensure that the new units would be compatible with the 1,956 units it had bought earlier, the CAC noted that the 12,046 remaining units to be procured represented more than six times the original order.

In a "best case scenario" of a public bidding, the same supplier for the 1,956 units may win again but at a lower bid price, the coalition said in a statement.

In a "bad case scenario," another supplier offering a different radio may win, making the first set of communication equipment inaccessible to the new set, the CAC said.

But the coalition said the 1,956 radios could be used just for specific areas or AFP units while the rest could be used anywhere. The AFP would then have two radio systems.

Suggestions

Reacting to other procurement problems reported by the INQUIRER, the CAC recommended the following measures in the bidding of DND and AFP contracts:

- Project proponents must always be clear and unbiased in writing project specifications, not favoring any specific supplier, manufacturer or even a brand.
- Project management teams or technical working groups should do good market research to facilitate the decisions at the BAC level.
- To enhance transparency in the bidding process, a master timetable for all procurement of supplies in any agency should be readily available to the public.

The coalition also called on the government to "prosecute crooks ... to complete the cycle of procurement reforms in any agency."

"We strongly urge the Ombudsman to act judiciously on all pending cases related to procurement law violations—especially the Commission on Elections and e-Mega Pacific bidding scam," it said.

The Comelec had paid P1.3 billion to the Mega Pacific consortium which was judged by the Supreme Court to be ineligible, and the government has not recovered its down payment.

In October last year, however, the Ombudsman cleared all Comelec officials of any wrongdoing. *Yvonne Chua, contributor*

Jayben P. Matamis tops nurses' exam…

From page A1

Macadangdang Olairez, Grasheila Pia Cristi Silva, 87.40.

5. Jerico Albay Baylon, Barry Hope Buaging Campaner, Claire Baluyot Mata, Meliza Alvarado Sotelo, 87.20.

6. Venus Sofia Janubas Balatero, Claudette Leocadio De Castro, Mary Joy Lauron Din, Glorybelle Gallego Molano, Jomar Angelo Panlasigui Monton, 87.00.

7. Chislon Mark David Maderazo Gabriola, Nazelyn Anne Dongalo Garsuta, John Mark Vergara Gonzales, Rose Ann Mendoza Rodil, 86.80.

8. Lester Osorio Camacho, Carlo Manalo Dangcalan, Maria Jeanette Cuya Daza, Eileen Marie Villasor Inong, 86.60.

9. Jenny Riza Abreu Banta, Joyce Ann Pablo Cabading, Marlui Ganaba Gascon, Mike Sherwin Ortua Lazo, Diana Escandor Mahinay, Christine Ngo Pabiloña, Rio Anne Juezan Sederiosa, Gay Alonzo Taboclaon, Madilyn Leoncio Villanueva, 86.40.

10. Everly Joy Delarmente Anareta, Annabelle Ballocanag Areola, Ronald Jornadal Baldevieso, Shayne Vargas Caseria Remedios, Jane Opina Francisco, Cynthia Chua Ho, Maria Visitacion Ricio Manese, Maria Teresa Lugtu Palamine, Fredelisa Mesa Tabelon, Maria Glenda Bocateja Valencia, Karla Susan Edrial, 86.20

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References:

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OFW recruiters threaten to quit over gov't rules

By Leila B. Salaverria

RECRUITMENT AGENCIES ARE threatening to shut down their operations and hold up the deployment of hundreds of thousands of domestic helpers abroad if the government prohibits them from charging "placement fees," along with other stringent new requirements.

Recruitment consultant Emmanuel Geslani said more than 300 agencies bringing domestic helpers to neighboring countries like Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Taiwan are protesting the new rules of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, which they say are "so restrictive that it would be better not to deploy domestic helpers overseas at all."

Aside from abolishing placement fees, other new requirements of the POEA are: Increased minimum monthly salaries of domestic helpers, from $200 to $400; increased minimum age, from 21 to 25, and additional training from the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.

These new rules, he said, are meant to improve the stock of the country's domestic helpers and turn them into "supermaids."

On placement fees, Geslani said recruiters in Hong Kong and Taiwan had existing agreements with local recruitment agencies and were required to pay "brokers' fees" to secure contracts for domestic helpers from the Philippines.

With the no placement fee policy, the agencies would not be able to pay the brokers' fees, he claimed.

The increased minimum wages and training requirements, they said, would make Filipino domestics more expensive to hire. Labor-absorbing countries may simply opt to get helpers from other countries or this may give rise to illegal recruitment, they warned.

These agencies sent 120,000 domestic helpers to neighboring Asian countries in 2005, he added.

Geslani said recruitment agencies are appealing to labor officials to defer the implementation of the present rules, or to set a time-frame for their slow implementation to give them time to make adjustments.

On the other hand, overseas job applicants have complained of exorbitant placement fees charged by some recruiters. Officials had also noted that overseas workers, particularly those who were very young, were vulnerable to abuse.

Senate President Manny Villar wants overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to be provided with regular counseling services in view of the increasing number of violent incidents and crimes involving them.

The latest victim was a 47-year-old Filipino domestic helper in Hong Kong who reportedly committed suicide by jumping from the 41st floor of the residential building where she worked.

"I understand that the Department of Labor and Employment sends social workers to help distressed OFWs. I just don't know if they do that on a regular basis, which I think they should, and not only when problems arise," said Villar, vice chair of the Senate foreign relations committee.

Some of them were even the perpetrators of the crimes, Villar said, citing the case of a Filipino maid who admitted killing her ward, a young boy, in Kuwait. Other high-profile incidents included the case of Jane Lapuebla who was killed by another Filipino, Guen Aguilar, in Singapore, and Ivy Bautista who was killed in Santander, Spain.

With reports from Cynthia Balana and Jerome Aning

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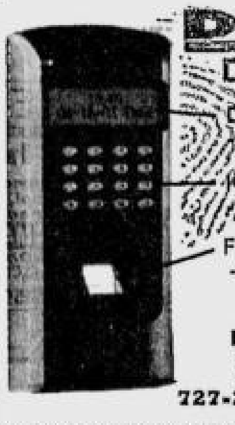

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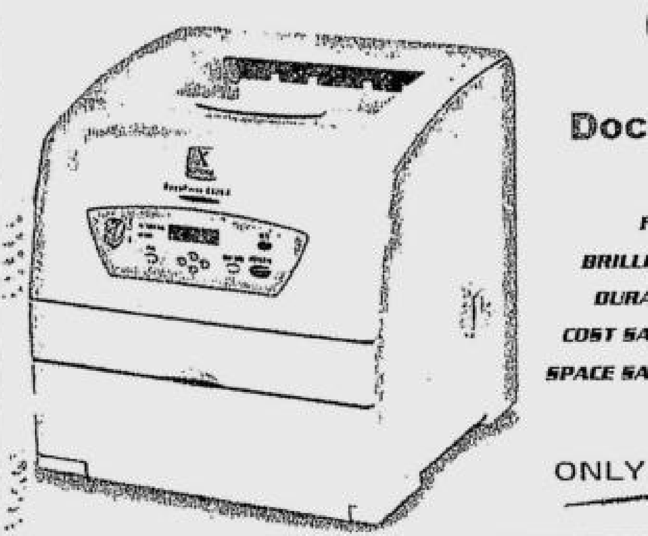

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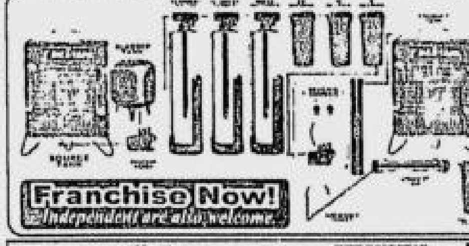

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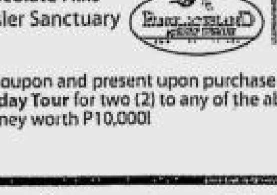

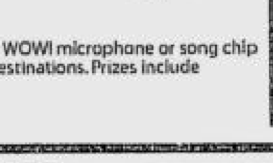

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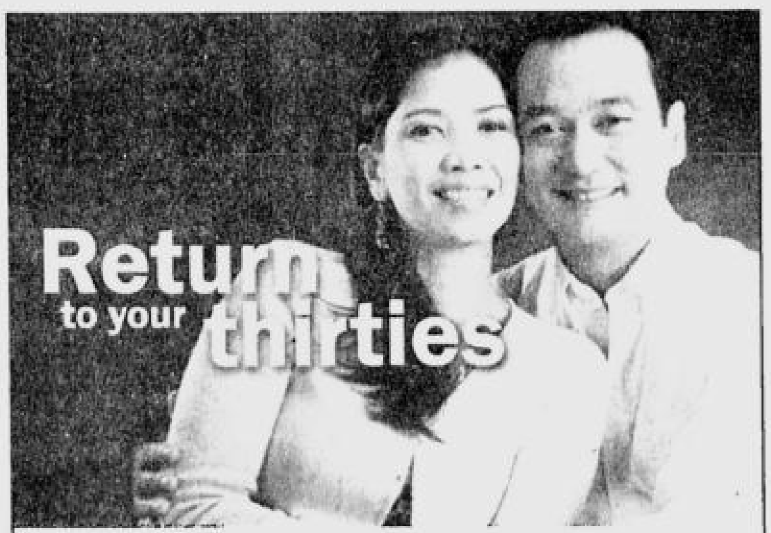

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End of Abu seen with app't of new military chief

By Alcuin Papa

ALL HOPES THE NOTORIOUS Abu Sayyaf terror group will be finally neutralized now rest on the shoulders of a new military commander in Sulu, the military leadership said yesterday.

Philippine Army spokesperson Maj. Ernesto Torres announced the appointment of Col. Antonio Supnet as the commanding officer of the 104th Brigade based in Sulu province.

Torres described Supnet as "a well-rounded officer" who will take charge of ongoing operations against the Abu Sayyaf and the Indonesia-based regional terrorist network Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), which has ties to Osama bin Laden's international al-Qaida terror network.

Torres said the military was "not only expecting more encounters but also apprehensions and the surrender of more members of the two terrorist groups" with the designation of Supnet.

"He (Supnet) has a deep appreciation of his area of responsibility. He knows the people well. He knows the enemy and the terrain. He is a good trainer. He is a disciplinarian," Torres said.

He added that another of Supnet's strengths was his being a lawyer, for which he was expected to do everything "by the book."

"He will have a strong impact on the military operations in the area. It (his appointment) will have a big impact against the Abu Sayyaf, JI and other lawless elements. He is a good officer," Torres added.

Supnet, whose last assignment was as commander of Task Force Zamboanga, replaced Col. Reynaldo Sealana, who was given another Army brigade to head in the Visayas, Torres said.

Before his assignment to Zamboanga, Supnet was chief of staff of the now defunct Southern Luzon Command. He had also headed the Anti-Crime Task Force of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, an elite unit based in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

Supnet's appointment came as the military had begun implementing "Operation Plan Ultimatum," which is aimed at neutralizing key Abu Sayyaf and JI leaders believed to be hiding in the island-province of Sulu.

Ground operations to hunt down the terrorists have been going on carried out by Philippine Army and Marine forces since August last year.

The Marines figured in an encounter with the Abu Sayyaf in Patikul, Sulu, in September which purportedly led to the death of the terror group's chieftain, Khadaffy Janjalani.

DNA samples taken from the remains are now being studied for verification by forensic experts from the United States and the Philippines in the US.

Police reshuffle still on

THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL Police is standing firm on its plan to reshuffle 37 provincial and city police commanders around the country even as provincial governors voiced their opposition to the new assignments.

PNP Director General Oscar Calderon said the new police chiefs assumed the posts vacated by officials who had completed their two-year tours of duty.

In a statement yesterday, Calderon said the new commanders "will insure a clean slate and fresh start when the governors are given a new mandate in the May 2007 local elections."

PNP spokesperson Chief Supt. Samuel Pagdilao said the purpose of the reshuffle was to erase any "familiarization" between the police and local officials during the elections.

By law, reassignments in the government, including the police and military, are disallowed beginning Jan. 14, the start of the election campaign period. *Alcuin Papa*

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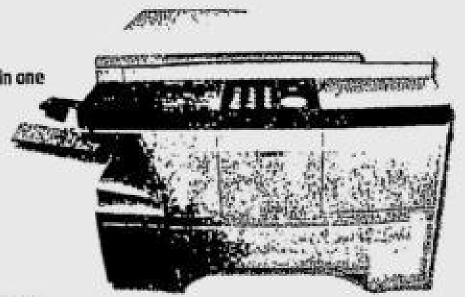

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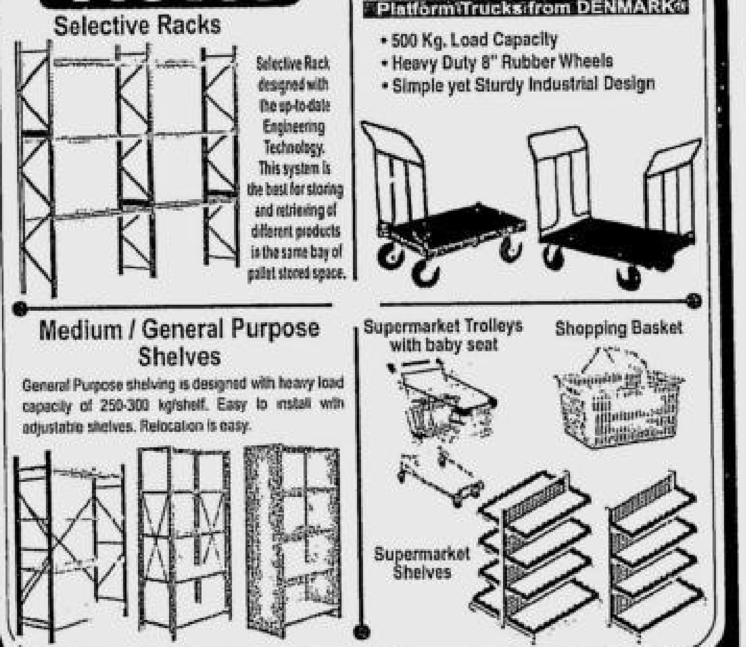

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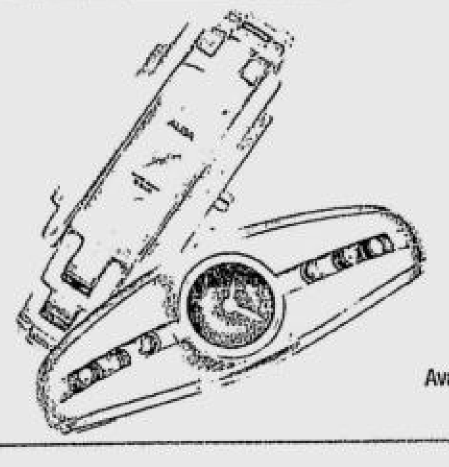

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Pinoy priest in US led double life

FREDERICKSBURG, Virginia—A Filipino Catholic priest suspected of stealing more than $600,000 (about P30 million) from two churches was living a double life as a family man in a neighboring county, according to court documents.

The 50-year-old Rev. Rodney L. Rodis, who had been living in the United States since 1991, was indicted earlier this week on a felony embezzlement charge. If convicted,he could face up to 20 years in prison.

A document included in papers committing Rodis to jail listed him as living with a wife and three children in Fredericksburg, the Richmond Times-Dispatch reported Saturday. It was not clear whether Rodis,ordained a priest in the Philippines in 1986, was the children's father.

The Catholic Diocese of Richmond was surprised to hear about Rodis' living arrangement, diocese lawyer William Etherington said, as were neighbors in the subdivision where the family had lived in a two-story brick home for at least eight years.

Neighbors said Rodis—who lived with a woman he referred to as his wife and three children ranging in age from about five to 20, told them he was in the import-export business. They said he was often gone for days or weeks at a time.

"I did think there was something strange," said Bev King, who used to live near Rodis. "He was always vague about what he did."

The Spotsylvania County real estate assessment Web site listed Joyce Sillador as the owner of the house, and neighbors said Rodis' wife's name was Joyce.

The Most Rev. Francis X. DiLorenzo, bishop of the Richmond Diocese, had suspended Rodis' faculties, meaning Rodis is not allowed to represent the diocese or perform priestly duties.

Rodis, still a citizen of the Philippines, was pastor at St. Jude Catholic Church and Immaculate Conception Catholic Church since 1993. Before this he served as parochial vicar at St. Mark Catholic Church in Virginia Beach for one year and then chaplain at Mary Immaculate Hospital in Newport News for another year. In May, he retired due to health problems.

An investigation began in November after church officials found that a donation to the parishes had not been recorded. Rodis allegedly set up a separate church bank account, to which he funneled some donation money from September 2001 through October 2006, Etherington said.

Rodis appeared in Louisa General District Court on Thursday, where he agreed to surrender his passport as part of an agreement in which his bond was reduced from $100,000 to $10,000.

John Williams, a member of Immaculate Conception, said Rodis was the best priest he had ever known and that he couldn't imagine Rodis in jail or leading a double life.

"I never heard one negative word about him," Williams said.

Neighbor Bob Hagan said Rodis was diligent about his yard and that the family seemed nice.

"I figure the religious issues are for him to sort out and the legal issues are being sorted out for him," he said. *AP*

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Pay hike still up to wage boards

MALACAÑANG PREFERS THAT THE TRIPARtite regional wage boards make the decision on the demand of private sector workers for a wage hike because this could best balance the interests of both labor and employers, it said yesterday.

Effectively shooting down the option of a legislated wage increase for organized labor, the Palace expressed confidence that labor, business and the government institutions concerned "would be able to find a middle-ground on wage issues."

"We need to strike a balance in according to our workers their due and, at the same time, protect the survival and viability of enterprises," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in a statement.

Bunye pointed out the tripartite regional wage boards "so far have been sensitive to this balanced objective."

He reminded the public that, for its part, the government had never failed to ensure that workers benefited from "socioeconomic, non-wage benefits."

This included protecting the workers from surges in the prices of basic commodities and the granting of social services to them.

The House of Representatives has approved a bill that seeks to grant a P125-wage increase to minimum daily wage earners. The Senate has yet to act on the measure. *Christine O. Avendaño*

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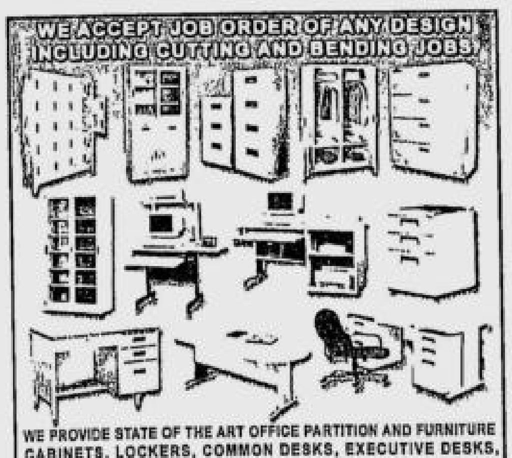

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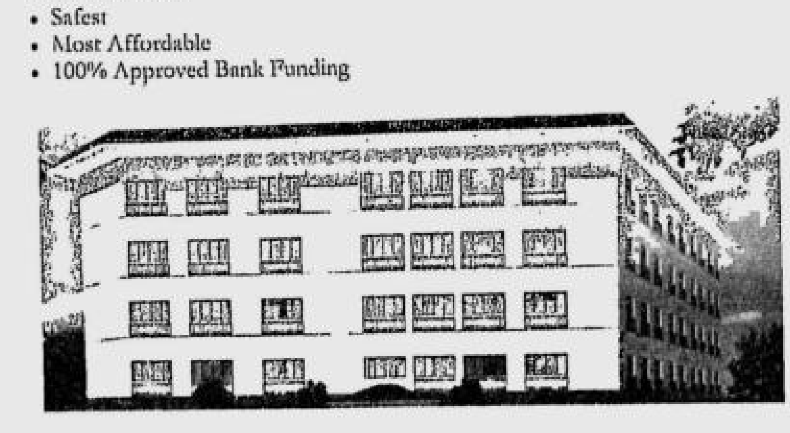

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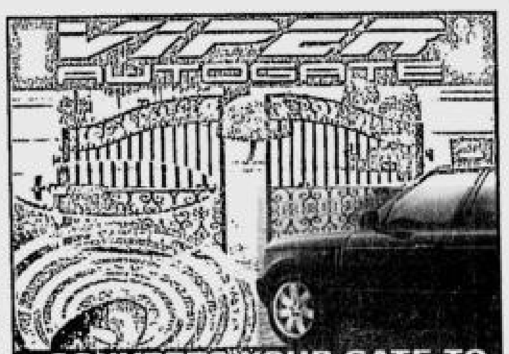

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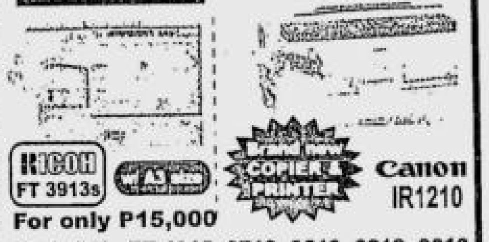

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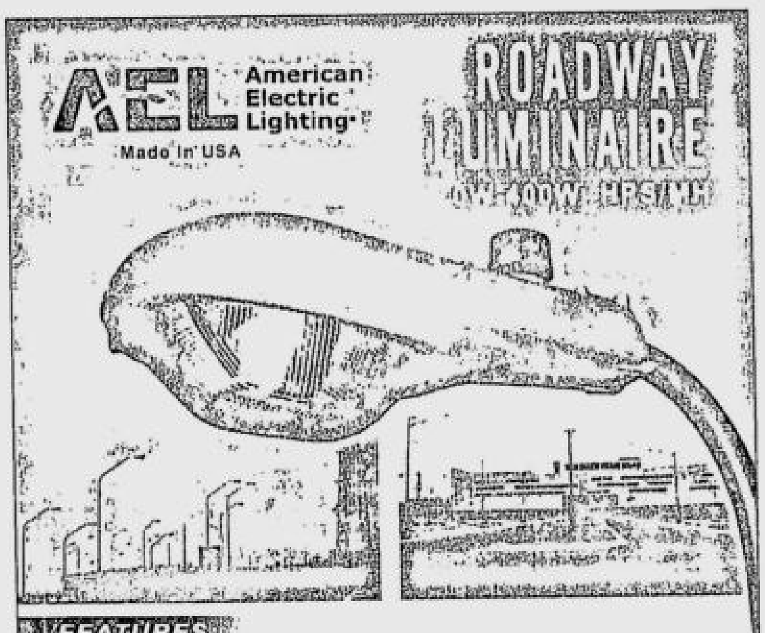

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GMA calls on Burmese rulers to release Aung Sa

From page A1

ma to "make greater progress toward national reconciliation." They called for the release of detainees but did not name the democracy leader.

Ms Arroyo also said Burma should consider the desire expressed by Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy to be consulted by the government, and added that "dialogue and compromise should be an ongoing process."

The President said there was "tremendous concern" in the international community about the 61-year-old Nobel Peace Prize winner, and expressed hope that her request for more regular medical attention would be granted.

Positive developments

Ms Arroyo also noted the positive developments in recent months, including a decline in the number of cases filed against individuals lodging forced labor complaints against the government.

Soe Win, according to a diplomatic source, explained his country's "road map" to democracy and what he termed internal problems. Rights groups say the "road map" is a sham to deflect pressure to democratize.

Reporting on the Burma issue, Ms Arroyo said that the summit had agreed on the need to "preserve Asean's credibility as an effective regional organization by demonstrating a capacity to manage important issues within the region."

She said Asean duly noted Burma's implementation of its road map to democracy but it continued to "encourage it to make greater progress toward national reconciliation."

"We called for the release of those placed under detention and for the effective dialogue with all parties concerned," she said.

Asean's proposal to shift to a rules-based bloc with the ratification of a new charter is widely seen as a means to put pressure on members such as Burma that do not toe the organization's line.

Burma escaped a possible sanction from the UN Security Council after China and Russia vetoed a US resolution moving for the release of an estimated 1,000 political prisoners in the country.

RP offer of help

In a possible change of policy, Asean leaders offered to help Burma deal with humanitarian problems, including the displacement of people by rural insurgencies and diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, Associated Press reported.

Ms Arroyo offered her country's help to advise Burma on how to deal with displaced villagers—a key pr
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AFTER unveiling the Asean Grove (background), Fi
Arroyo (fourth, from left) and his daughter Luli (to h
Irene Ong, India's First Lady Gursharan Kaur, Thaila
Chitravadee Chulanot, Alice Favila, Francisco Bene
Tomas Osmeña and his wife Margot in a photo sessi
Barangay Talamban in Cebu City.

Energy security agenda of East Asian leaders' r

From page A1

ternational Convention Center. At noon, the leaders are expected to sign the Cebu Declaration on Energy Security.

When first held in 2005, the EAS countries decided to intensify regional cooperation in five areas of concern—finance, education, health, natural disaster mitigation and energy security.

The Cebu staging would be the first time that the summit would have a "focus"—energy—in contrast to the "free wheeling" nature of the earlier Kuala Lumpur talks, the diplomat explained.

Regional fuel stockpile

With the host having the prerogative to choose the agenda, Ms Arroyo picked energy as this year's topic since it is widely considered the most vital issue today both for the host country and the region, and where cooperation could be most easily achieved, the official added.

The leaders will examine the possibility of a regional fuel stockpile along with other possible ways of holding oil reserves, according to the draft of a statement. They will also work toward freer trade on biofuels and a standard on biofuels used in engines and cars.

The draft, which was approved earlier by foreign ministers, also calls for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions but offers no regional targets, unlike the Euro
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s outlined in a "road map to
the junta says will culminate

the proceedings a sham be-
delegates were hand-picked,
the military rubber-stamps the process, and because Suu Kyi is barred from the meetings.

Some Asean countries, like Malaysia, have lately become more blunt in their criticism of Burma but this has not led to the radical political changes they have sought. Philippine officials think the group should change its approach.

"Asean has dwelt too much on political and economic engagement with Myanmar," the Philippine paper said. It added that the Philippines' current chairmanship of Asean and focus on the human dimension of regional integration "offers a fresh opportunity for Asean to reexamine its approach to the situation in Myanmar."

The Burmese junta took power in 1988 after crushing a prodemocracy movement. In 1990, it refused to hand over power when Suu Kyi's party won a landslide election victory. Since then, the Nobel laureate has been in and out of detention, and she is currently held in near-solitary confinement in her home. *With reports from AP, AFP*

Leaders say Korean soaps 'rock'

By Volt Contreras

CEBU—AS MUCH AS THEY WOULD have wanted to stick to the more serious matters, Asean leaders gathered here apparently couldn't help but convey a shared sentiment of their peoples to South Korean President Roh Moo-Hyun: Those Korean "tele-novellas" rock!

The matter unexpectedly came up at yesterday's meeting between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and their top guest from Seoul, according to Ambassador Vic Lecaros, spokesperson of the 12th Asean summit.

"There was talk around the room of Korea acquiring what they called 'soft power,' the popular influence of Korean culture as exemplified by the growing popularity of Korean television materials," Lecaros said in a briefing, reading from his "notes" of the meeting.

Later in an interview, Lecaros recalled that the leaders of Malaysia, Singapore, "and I think even GMA (President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo) said something about it, that it is enjoying a huge following."

Somebody among the leaders remarked about the popularity of Korean soaps in his native country and then another leader butted in: "In mine as well," Lecaros added.

The fan gab was among the rare light moments to leak out of the closed -door meetings held at the Shangri-La Mactan, which was largely sealed off to media save for some preselected photographers.

In the Philippines, Korean serials, from teen romances to the period epic "Jewel in the Palace," have been dominating primetime TV for the past few years, even spawning pirated videos for fans who can't wait for reruns.

Serious business was indeed tackled before the leaders segued into Korean TV talk.

The host President Arroyo opened the session by congratulating the Republic of Korea on the election of its former foreign minister, Ban Ki-Moon, as the new Secretary General of the United Nations, Lecaros reported.

Roh drew Asean attention to the need to address "nontraditional security" concerns such as the traffic in illegal drugs in the region. He also welcomed the entry of Asean member Vietnam into the World Trade Organization and spoke on the proposed free trade agreement between South Korea and Asean, Lecaros said.

The Korean leader also cited plans to double Seoul's official development assistance to the region by 2009.

rst Gentleman Jose Miguel
is left) pose with (from left)
nd's First Lady Khunying
dicto, and Cebu City Mayor
n at the Friendship Park in
JUNJIE MENDOZA/CEBU DAILY NEWS

tops

meet

pean Union, which this week
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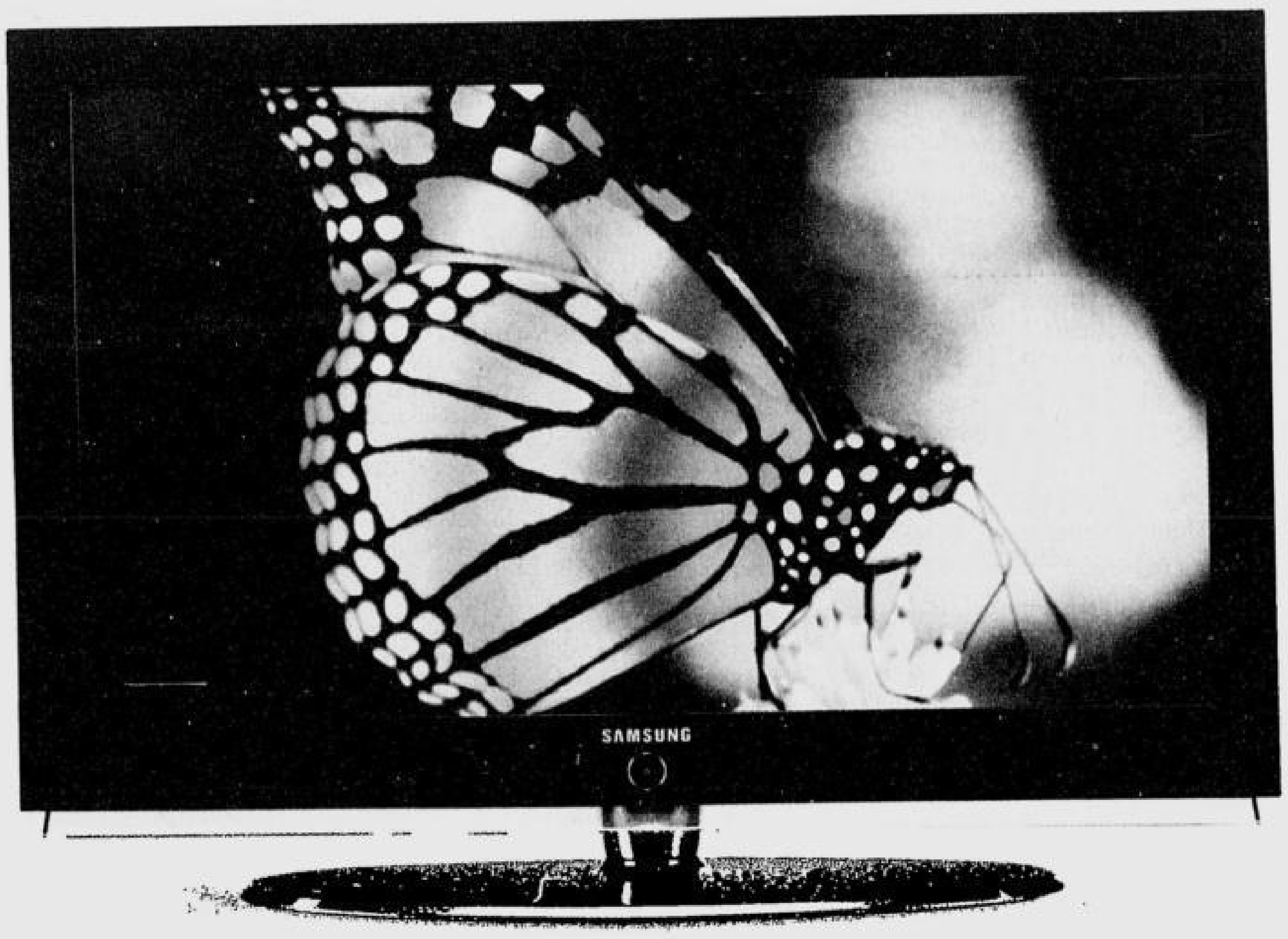

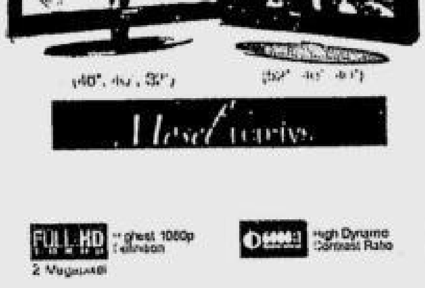

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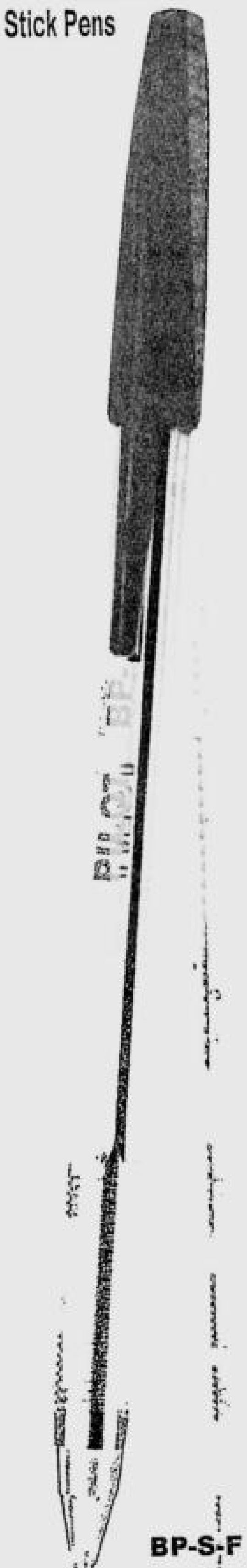

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OPINION

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Hunting Usman

EDITORIAL

COULD THE MORO ISLAMIC LIBERATION FRONT have done something to stop the coordinated series of bombings that shook the cities of General Santos, Kidapawan and Cotabato last week? Perhaps; perhaps not. But the fact that the question itself is being asked, even by those who have long supported peace negotiations with the separatist movement, means only one thing: These acts of terrorism, by ostensibly creating a sense of urgency, do not help the peace talks. Instead, they undermine the public goodwill without which no negotiated settlement can succeed.

We do not mean to say that the MILF was behind the bombings. And we do not mean to suggest that Philippine security forces do not bear any responsibility for the lapses in law enforcement and counter-terrorism that allowed the bombers a free and deadly hand. They certainly bear the brunt of it.

The police director of Central Mindanao was right in relieving the police chief of Cotabato City immediately after the bombing on Wednesday night, pending investigation; the police chiefs of General Santos and Kidapawan also have some explaining to do.

Even more to the point: The chief of staff of the Armed Forces, Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, was doubtless right when he said the bombings had embarrassed him and the government. The explosions, occurring one after the other in a five-hour period, were timed for maximum international impact: They went off on the eve of the 12th Asean Summit, at a time when senior ministers from the 10 Asean member-states and dozens of foreign correspondents were already congregating in Cebu. The bombs claimed seven lives, and injured more than 30 other victims.

Here are two more reasons to be (deeply) embarrassed.

The man who the Armed Forces believe carried out the bombings, Usman Basit, has been involved in other terrorist attacks, including bombings in two towns; and, in April 2002, the bombing of a department store in General Santos, which killed 15 people and injured 60 others. In other words, Usman is not an unknown quantity, but a known terrorist.

He is also a fugitive on the run, because he was arrested in July 2002 but escaped after three months. How did he escape, why does he remain at large after more than four years, who is he and what makes him tick: these and similar questions remain essentially unanswered. Even though he was detained for three months, all the AFP said it knew about him was that his brother, an Islamic cleric, was killed in an encounter with troops several years ago.

Embarrassing? Downright inexcusable.

None of this, however, justifies the MILF's lukewarm response to the recent bombings. One would think, listening to their official spokesman, that the MILF sees no urgency to the peace talks—or cannot conceive of a connection between these acts of terrorism and public support for a peace agreement.

"We are willing to help arrest them (the bombing suspects) based on the mechanism of the peace talks," political affairs chief Ghadzali Jaafar said. Translation: We'll wait for the government to formally petition us.

After denying the AFP claim that Usman was a former MILF commander, spokesman Eid Kabalu added: "We are investigating our ranks, but I am repeating, we did not have anything to do with the attacks. We are engaged in talks with the government and we have agreed in the past to help authorities in stopping foreign terrorists."

How about home-grown terrorists? There's the rub. Police officers believe Usman is living somewhere in the Liguasan Marsh, which they describe as an "MILF area." It is difficult to contemplate the possibility that Usman can continue working in parts of Mindanao—plotting with the Abu Sayyaf bandit group, or perhaps sourcing bomb material for the radical fundamentalist Jemaah Islamiyah—without the MILF getting wind of his activity.

Perhaps they would like to share their intelligence? Usman's capture would help restore some of the lost credibility of the peace process, and strengthen the hand of those on both sides of the negotiating table who want a peace agreement, and soon.

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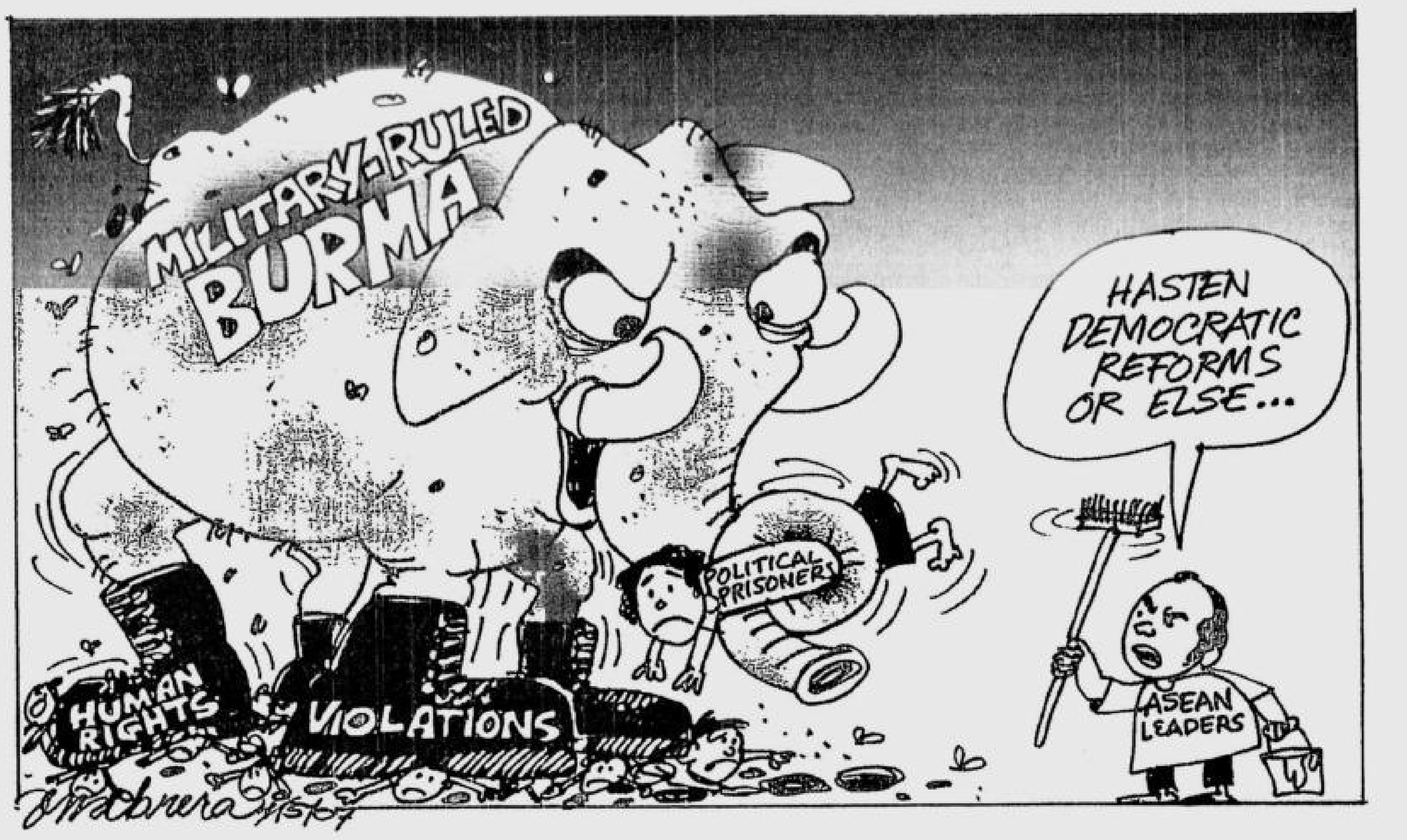

Can Lagman be in two places at the same time?

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THIS IS A CONTINUATION OF LAST FRIDAY'S column on the conflicting claims about the distribution of relief goods in Tabaco, Albay in the wake of Typhoon Reming. For those who tuned in late, here is a background:

It started when I wrote here that Bicolanos were complaining that while they were suffering from the ravages of the typhoon, their congressmen, specifically Edcel Lagman and Luis Villafuerte, instead of helping them, were in Manila trying to railroad the constituent assembly resolution through the House of Representatives. Lagman wrote that he was actually flying back and forth between Manila and Albay to help his constituents.

Then came the information, published in a later column, that relief goods from the Department of Social Welfare and Development and NFA rice were repacked in plastic bags stamped with the name of Lagman's daughter (who is running for mayor of Tabaco), before these were distributed to evacuees. The deceit and political opportunism angered Msgr. Ramon C. Tronqued who refused to accept the relief goods.

Lagman wrote another letter attacking Monsignor Tronqued, which prompted the parish priest to fax a letter to me with the request that I publish it in the "interest of truth and honesty."

The first part of his letter was published last Friday. This is the second part:

"Vice Mayor Rocha (whom Lagman claimed in his letter as being supported by Monsignor Tronqued) is the chair of our Parish Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and he has actively served our parish community long before I became parish priest of Tabaco. And besides, during the typhoon, Vice Mayor Rocha was the OIC of Tabaco since the City Mayor was not around.

"At the height of the typhoon, we coordinated in sheltering in the church and its pastoral center hundreds of evacuees, saving them from danger and peril. (Where was Lagman?) Since Typhoon Reming, our church has continued to distribute relief goods solicited from donors, including Rocha, and the church premises has become the venue of relief distribution in the city by various groups, NGOs and numerous private donors. Nobody has been excluded, except in the case of that deceitful Dec. 4 episode. Numerous generous private persons and groups have placed their trust in our system since transparency is maintained and the intention of the donor is respected.

"5. And finally, irony of ironies, Lagman accuses me, a Catholic priest, of being prejudiced in favor of the Church. What does he expect of me, betray my Church? 'Tronqued is also prejudiced against me and my daughter for authoring bills on family planning which are vehemently opposed by the Catholic Church,' Lagman wrote. Sure, during his daughter's stint in Congress, she authored the proposed Reproductive Health Care Bill, which many refer to as the 'abortion bill in disguise.' Sure, Lagman is one of the main proponents of the so-called 'two-child policy.' But the point is not my personal belief on such issues. The stand of the Philippine Catholic Church on the matter is known to all. And I am happily in full communion with the Catholic Church, otherwise I have no business being a Catholic priest.

"I was here in Tabaco, Albay when Reming destroyed our life and land. Since the typhoon, priests have stayed and remained with our suffering parishioners (Where was Lagman?) I believe that here in Tabaco City, our priests and lay workers were able to save many lives and assist thousands of others.

"Mr. Cruz, Lagman has accused you of 'seeing it all wrong.' But as I see it, you saw clearly what some refused to see and still wouldn't want others to see. The well-appreciated generosity of others to us victims of Reming has been muddled by political and self-serving interests of some powerful locals. In fact, so many other questionable and scandalous acts in Tabaco have yet to be brought to the knowledge of those who see clearly."

Monsignor Tronqued ends his letter with a jibe at Lagman's claim that during Typhoon Reming, he was both in Manila (seen by thousands on television helping railroad the Con-ass) and in Albay "helping his constituents." "Take this from a priest," said Monsignor Tronqued, "bilocation, the capacity to be in two places at one time, has been reported to have happened to only very few saintly persons. And according to the Catholic Encyclopedia, claims of bilocation are best treated with a healthy attitude of skepticism. God bless you and your noble profession."

The trouble with Lagman is that, despite the fact that it is impossible to be in two places at the same time unless one is a saint (which Lagman definitely is not), he still cannot decide where he wants to live: in Albay or in Quezon City. Several years ago, he decided to run for congressman of Quezon City after serving for years as congressman of Albay. The reason is that his daughter got his old congressional seat for his district of Albay. He was defeated resoundingly in Quezon City. So he went back to Albay to run for his old congressional seat, the position he is occupying now. He is grooming his daughter to be mayor of Tabaco. A son and namesake of his, Edcel Lagman Jr., is a councilor of Quezon City. You can see his banners (advertising himself) polluting the city. The banners must have escaped the attention of the workers of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) who were tasked to remove such illegal eyesores.

Several months ago, old man Lagman (the father, not the son)—although he is a congressman of Albay, not of Quezon City—made a group of Quezon City residents his constituents and tried to pull strings to help them grab a big chunk of the La Mesa Dam watershed to be made into a residential subdivision. *Ano ba* Edcel, *saan mo ba gustong maging* congressman, *sa* Albay *o sa* Quezon City?

Lapses

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

JOVITO SALONGA IS KIND. HE ALLOWS FOR Court of Appeals Justice Apolinario Bruselas having made an unwitting mistake in misquoting eminent American jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes. "We would like to think that Justice Bruselas, highly regarded by his peers, did not deliberately misquote Holmes .... A researcher or another associate for this particular case might be the source of the doctored or falsified quotation .... But Justice Bruselas, an expert in criminal law, (could still) be held responsible for the offense of falsification."

The quote in question is this. Holmes had said: "Great constitutional provisions must be administered with caution .... (I)t must be remembered that legislatures are the ultimate guardians of the liberties and welfare of the people in quite as great a degree as the courts." Bruselas quoted the second sentence as: "It must be remembered that the other branches of the government are ultimate guardians of the liberties and welfare of the people...."

A trifling matter? Well, it was on the head of that pin that Bruselas stood his justification for Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo having the authority to spring Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith from jail and deliver him to the Americans. If the executive, which is one of the branches of government, is also as much a guardian and arbiter of the liberties and welfare of the people as the courts, then GMA is well within her right to exercise judgment—however she is prone to lapses there—in the disposition of Smith.

But Holmes in fact said nothing of the kind. He said the exact opposite: The executive has no business meddling in the administration of great constitutional provisions. As Salonga points out, in the particular instance where Holmes uttered those comments, he expressly forbade the state governor and his aides from having anything to do with the case.

Could Bruselas have made an honest mistake? Well, he is dealing with a government that is universally known to have none of the honesty and all of the mistakes. He was under pressure to find a justification, however flimsy, to take the sting out of public protest, not least Nicole's, over the favorable treatment of a convicted rapist. The kind GMA used to put to death, along with kidnappers, to score points with the local anti-crime groups, until she changed her tack, scrapping the death penalty, to score points with the international community in turn.

How is it possible to change "legislatures" into "the other branches of government" unwittingly? An underpaid, overworked and sleepy clerk of court might change legislatures into "armatures," or "nomenclatures" or some not-fit-to-print word to register his feelings for his plight, but he is not likely to confuse "legislatures" with "other branches of the government." And in any case, it's the easiest thing in the world in this digital age to cut and paste, which is what you do to quotes to assure you do not quote wrongly.

Could it have been a researcher or associate who fed him the wrong quote? Well, to begin with, there is such a thing as command responsibility, a doctrine which says you are responsible for the actions of your people. Though that is a concept that seems to elude us: Journalists and political activists are being slaughtered all over the place, a scale of mayhem comparable only to Marcos' time, and the *tongressmen* say they can find nothing to connect the Chief Executive to the not very cheap executions. But that is another story. More than that, you are going to base your justification for a matter of epic national importance on that quote and you won't bother to check its veracity? You wonder how Bruselas got to be highly regarded by his peers, as Salonga says. If true, it doesn't reflect well on the quality of mind of his peers.

Salonga says that for the crime, Bruselas stands to reap "*aresto mayor* or up to six years' imprisonment." The Latin sounds formidable and almost inexorable. But I myself think that Bruselas will be punished most severely only in the same way that Virgilio Garcillano was punished most severely. For engaging in a long-drawn conversation with the President (she was still so at the time) in a voice as distinctive as hers, for denying it afterward with the resoluteness of a husband caught by his wife in bed with another woman ("This is not what you think..."), and for calling the whole world a liar for insisting he had fled the country to avoid arrest when he was here all the time, Garci has been severely punished by having Malacañang's blessings to run for congressman in his hometown. I wouldn't be surprised if Bruselas is severely punished by being shoved near the head of the line for Supreme Court justice, and his assistants given promotions.

Frankly, I don't know what we're doing congregating with other countries, or even hosting events like the Asean conference with its subtle presumptions of leadership and guidance. It's not just the blind leading the blind, it's the blind leading the seeing —or, at least, the one-eyed. The deterioration—no, the disappearance—of moral scruple in this country is astounding. Other countries aspire to become the best, we aspire to become the worst. Other countries aspire to reach greater heights, we don't mind hitting even the lowest depths. It used to be we were content only with mediocrity: It was enough that we got by with the least effort. While others made love and war, we just made do. Today, we're not just content with mediocrity, we've made our peace with perfidy.

Other countries call deliberate efforts to mislead the public treason, we call it governance. Other countries call stealing the vote a crime, we call it a lapse in judgment. Other countries call people who do those things names, we call them president of a republic and justice of the court of appeals.

Court packing

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

THERE IS NOW ONE VACANCY IN THE SUPREME Court resulting from the appointment of Justice Reynato Puno as Chief Justice. There will be another vacancy in May upon the retirement of another justice. Once the President has filled these vacancies, the Court, in terms of numbers, will be dominated by President Macapagal-Arroyo's appointees. I emphasize "in terms of numbers" because dominance in numbers does not necessarily mean dominance over thought. Being appointed should not necessarily mean being enslaved.

I recall the case of the late Justice Cecilia Muñoz Palma. At the time when she was being considered for appointment to the Supreme Court—she was then in the Court of Appeals—she visited me in my office, which was then in the Ateneo Law School along Padre Faura, and she told me that one qualifying question she was being asked was whether she was loyal. Well, she gave a proper answer and she was appointed. But she never surrendered her independence. Her Supreme Court opinions attest to that.

I have never attended a hearing conducted by the Judicial and Bar Council where prospective appointees to the judiciary are interviewed. Nor do I know how sharp and probing are the questions the JBC members ask. But the issue of personal or partisan loyalty, which is distinct from ideological position, is something that is very much a valid area for inquiry. The Court must be insulated from dominance by extraneous forces. And it is the solemn duty of the JBC to do everything needed to make sure that the Supreme Court, as its title signifies, remain **supreme**.

It might be good to recall a moment in the history of the Federal Supreme Court of the United States when it was threatened by executive dominance. President Roosevelt's quarrel with the Supreme Court, however, was not about partisan politics but about social philosophy. Roosevelt's animosity toward the Supreme Court arose early during his first term, when his New Deal of social and economic reform could not pass muster before a Supreme Court dominated by conservative old men. Six justices were then aged 70 or over and the youngest was 61. Under the US Constitution there was, even as now, no retirement age.

To neutralize the power of the old men, Roosevelt drafted a bill to reorganize the judiciary. The bill called for all justices over 70 to retire and, should they fail to do so, the President would be authorized to appoint another justice to sit in tandem with each justice older than 70. For the Supreme Court, it would have meant that the President could appoint six new justices.

The proposal was doomed from the beginning. It was opposed by both political foes and friends, and by conservatives and liberals alike. The draft bill died.

Biographers of Roosevelt agree that his court packing scheme robbed him of much of the political capital he had won in landslide election victories. It also weakened his war against poverty. But eventually the Court's social philosophy underwent change. In the end, too, the final winner was the American people. With the emphatic rejection of the court packing scheme, no similar plan has ever been presented again.

Roosevelt sought to achieve his court packing scheme through Congress. I have never heard of anything like it being presented to the Philippine Congress. But there was a time when the President could pack the Supreme Court at will. Under the 1973 Constitution, the President alone decided who should go to the Supreme Court. So, too, under the Revolutionary Government which took over after the ouster of President Ferdinand Marcos. President Corazon Aquino could appoint whomsoever she pleased.

When the time came for the drafting of a new Constitution in 1986, there was debate about whether appointments to the judiciary should go through the Commission on Appointments as under the 1935 Constitution. It was the revered former Chief Justice Roberto Concepcion who proposed the alternative which we now have. Appointments to the judiciary can only be made from a list of at least three nominees presented to the President by a Judicial and Bar Council.

Now it is being asked how effective the JBC is or can be in assuring the nation that the recommendees for appointment are the council's independent choices and not those of the President.

Consider the composition of the JBC. It is chaired *ex officio* by the Chief Justice. Other *ex officio* members are the justice secretary and a representative of Congress. Four other members are appointed by the President with confirmation by the Commission on Appointments: a representative of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, a law professor, a retired Supreme Court justice and a representative of the private sector. Significantly, the council operates under the supervision of the Supreme Court.

It is said that the proof of the pudding is in the eating. How would you rate how the appointing process has performed so far? How will it continue to perform?

Is there good news about Filipinos?

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Antonio J. Montalvan II

APPARENTLY THERE IS. AND THIS IS ACCORDING to a foreigner and frequent visitor to this country by the name of Steve Ray, who talks about good Filipino qualities that are probably so ordinary to (and, therefore, taken for granted by) us, but not to the objective eyes of a non-Filipino observer.

"Open Letter to Filipino Catholics" is being passed around in the Internet. It first appeared in an Ateneo alumni e-group, from where prodigious e-friend Marilou Barnes-Cortes forwarded it to my mailbox. Marilou told me I would not be the first to write about Ray's open letter. A few days ago, Fr. James Reuter, SJ published it in his column in another paper.

Among Ray's many best-selling books are: "Crossing the Tiber" (his conversion story), "Upon This Rock" (on the papacy), and just recently, "John's Gospel" (a comprehensive Bible study guide and commentary). Ray is also currently filming a 10-part video series titled "Footprints of God." The first two parts are out: "Peter, Keeper of the Keys" and "Mary, Mother of God" (now available in the Philippines).

As an anthropologist, however, I must take exception to Ray's reference of us as a "Catholic nation." We are not. To say that we are effectively wipes out the identity of the millions of Filipinos who are Muslims and who belong to other Christian denominations or non-Christian religious groups. And although we are predominantly Catholic, many of us—the majority, it seems—behave like Catholics in name only.

Nevertheless, Ray, in his "Open Letter" gives us something positive, for a change:

"We stepped into the church and it was old and a bit dark. Mass had just begun and we sat toward the front. We didn't know what to expect here in Istanbul, Turkey. I guess we expected it to be a somber Mass, but quiet and somber it was not. I thought I heard angels joyously singing behind me.

"The voices were rich, melodic and beautiful. What I discovered as I spun around to look did not surprise me because I had seen and heard the same thing in other churches around the world. It was not a choir of angels with feathered wings and halos but a group of delightful Filipino Catholics with smiles of delight and joy on their faces as they worshiped God and sang His praises. I had seen this many times before in Rome, in Israel, in the United States and other countries.

"Filipinos have special traits and they are beautifully expressed as I gazed at the happy throng giving thanks to God. What are the special traits which characterize these happy people? I will share a few that I have noticed, [in my travels] around the world, including visits to the Philippines.

"First, there is a sense of community, of family. These Filipino Christians did not sit apart from each other in different aisles. They sat together, closely. They didn't just sing quietly, mumbling, or simply mouthing the words. No, they raised their voices in harmony, together, as though they enjoyed the sense of unity and communion among them. They are family even if they are not related.

"Second, they have an inner peace and joy ... rare in the world today. When most of the world's citizens are worried and fretful, I have found Filipinos to have joy and peace, a deep sense of God's love that overshadows them. They have problems, too, and many in the Philippines have less material goods than others in the world, yet there is still a sense of happy trust in God and love of neighbor.

"Third, there is a love for God and for his Son Jesus that is almost synonymous with the word Filipino. There is also something that Filipinos are famous for around the world—their love for the Blessed Mother. Among the many Filipinos I have met, the affectionate title for Mary I always hear from their lips is 'Mama Mary.' For these gentle folks, Mary is not just a theological idea, a historical person, or a statue in a church—Mary is the mother of their Lord and their mother as well, their 'mama.'

"The Philippines is a Catholic nation—the only such nation in Asia—and this wonderful country exports missionaries around the world. They are not hired to be missionaries, not official workers of the church. No, they are workers and educators, doctors, nurses and housekeepers that go to other lands and travel to the far reaches of the earth, and everywhere they go they take the joyous Gospel of Jesus with them. They make a somber Mass joyful when they burst into a song. They convict the pagan of sin as they always keep the love of Jesus and the Eucharist central in their lives.

"My hope and prayer, while I am here in the Philippines, sharing my conversion story from Baptist Protestant to Roman Catholic, is that the Filipino people will continue to keep these precious qualities. I pray that they will continue loving their families, loving the Catholic Church, reading the Bible, loving Jesus, His Mother and the Eucharist.

"As many other religions and sects try to persuade them to leave the Church, may God give them the wisdom to defend the Catholic faith. As the world tempts them to sin and seek only money and fame and power, may God grant them the serenity to always remember that obedience to Christ and love for God is far more important than all the riches the world can offer.

"May the wonderful Filipino people continue to be a light of the Gospel to the whole world!"

* * *

Comments to monta@cu-cdo.edu.ph

A policy of panic

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

IN HIS MEMOIRS "A STONE FOR THE EDIFICE," Diosdado Macapagal recounted that as far back as his stint in the foreign service during the Quirino administration, he was unhappy with July 4 as our country's independence day. It caused "considerable inconvenience" for Philippine missions abroad (possibly because foreign diplomats went to US missions instead of going to ours on that date). Furthermore, he felt July 4 "was not inspiring enough ... since it recalled mostly the peaceful independence missions to the United States."

Like all politicians, he combined the pragmatic (foreigners not attending the Philippines' diplomatic parties on July 4) with the ideological (he wanted to steal the thunder from the Left, which looked to 1896 and not 1946). What he lacked, though, was a pretext to turn his inclination into policy: "The specific question," he recounted, after explaining his preference of June 12 (when Aguinaldo proclaimed Philippine independence under the aegis of a dictatorship) to Jan. 23 (when the Malolos Congress ratified the proclamation), "was when to make the change."

The "opportunity came when the US House of Representatives rejected the $73-million additional war payment bill on May 9, 1962. There was indignation among Filipinos. There was a loss of American goodwill ... though this was restored later by the reconsideration of the action ... Unable to resist the pressure of public opinion, I was constrained to obtain the agreement of Kennedy to defer [my] state visit for another time," Macapagal wrote. On May 17, 1962, Macapagal "certified as urgent to Congress the enactment of a measure to fix June 12 statutorily as independence day."

What's interesting to note is that Macapagal's pique became an opportunity for a national consensus. Party lines were crossed to support the declaration of June 12 as Philippine Independence Day and the public embraced the date. And he deftly exercised the powers of his office to put the Americans in their place and make his mark. (It started though the erosion of our Republic's—and, thus, our people's—sense of identity, by dropping what had been an evolutionary attitude toward our independence and substituting it, as part of a parvenu effort to claim descent from the 1896-98 independence efforts, with an unrealistic, muddled and essentially harmful exclusion of what came after the fall of the First Republic; the confusion this has caused is best demonstrated by the mess another Macapagal policy has caused: recognizing the 1943 Japanese-sponsored Republic as part of the legitimate order of our governments, a price too steep—because never asked for—to pay for Jose P. Laurel's posthumous political rehabilitation; it served the interests more of those still living, such as Macapagal himself, who served the puppet republic enthusiastically—see Hernando Abaya's "Memoirs of a Subversive").

When the present administration manifested its core political instinct—to panic—in response to a hostage-taking of a Filipino in Iraq, I opposed the decision to pull out there and then, not because I supported the Iraq war (I never have); I just felt strongly that international commitments, once entered upon, had to be honorably fulfilled.

President Macapagal-Arroyo's drumbeaters, since 2005, have made a fetish of "political will"—risking the unpopular so as to accomplish the national good. But where was that will, then? Instead, it demonstrated pure weakness, which persists to this day. Having embraced Bush Jr.'s war, the President bolted; and has spent the time since compensating for that act of international cowardice.

Including her folding in the face of American displeasure over the jailing of that convicted American Marine until—as the judge put it—the Philippine and American governments sorted out the question of where to detain the convict; and in the face of the US argument that an appeal should be resolved first before the American was to be handed over to Philippine custody. I will give the Americans credit for this much: everything they have done has been pretty respectful of Philippine law and the legal process; in that sense, the Visiting Forces Agreement has worked well for both sides; at no stage have the Americans shown an inclination simply to whisk away the accused and prevent their trial. And the Americans have given notice that there will be little boozing and whoring in store for future visitors from their armed forces, which I suspect will dim whatever public enthusiasm exists for the VFA outside official circles.

What should surprise is not what the Americans have done, but what our own chief executive chose to do. My understanding, based on talks with Philippine diplomats, is that the executive's behavior and arguments—up to the point the American convict was handed back to US custody—were not only excusable, but the right course of action. But then, the President herself said that the announcement of the Balikatan's postponement was too high a price to pay for matters to be worked out in the courts; if she panicked out of Iraq, in this instance, she then panicked out of the legal process, to which even the Americans had shown signs of commitment.

Surely an impeachable offense? But then what's one more?

And so, we have what we have, which is—as retired Justice Isagani Cruz pointed out over the weekend—the Court of Appeals bravely whistling as it twisted in the wind.

The administration overcompensates by calling for a reexamination of the VFA (but if so, then reexamine the anchor of Philippine foreign policy, our Mutual Defense Treaty, in place since the 1950s). The US Embassy is right: why now? It has pledged to police its forces more thoroughly, which will do much more than relying on an ally that's generally faithless.

Role of community in learning process

COMMENTARY

Dr. Evelyn Mejillano and Butch Hernandez

THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION LAUNCHED BY THE Foundation for Worldwide People Power in 2002 has now entered its fifth year.

We are elated that today, major private sector organizations, like the League of Corporate Foundations and the Philippine Business for Education, have started to heed our call for a national movement to make our education system truly relevant and socially transformative.

As of this writing, the member companies of the LCF and the PBED are earnestly at work crafting an education reform agenda called 57-75 premised on the qualitative improvement of learning outcomes throughout the public education system.

A cornerstone of this campaign is the People Power-inspired community participation strategy developed by the FWWPP. Our founder—Ms Eggie Duran Apostol—has said time and again in various fora that the complexity of the issue of education reform calls for deeper community involvement. The FWWPP's community participation strategy aims to help communities prioritize and address their respective education concerns.

But in the age of Google, Youtube and Yahoo, what education concerns should parents in the community prioritize exactly?

Less than a decade ago, these veritable wellsprings of information were the private preserve of the privileged private school students. Not anymore. The timeless and ubiquitous *sari-sari* store now offers Internet access, in broadband no less.

The fact that the average public school student's command of the English language is in the low 50 percent has not deterred him at all from figuring out how to play online games, meet people via Friendster and marvel at the wonders—and at times, the inanity—of the worldwide Web.

And yet, back in his classroom the chalk-and-talk method of instruction still prevails. The divide between the classroom and the real world is growing wider by the minute. Asking a pupil to memorize the names of Philippine mountain ranges as an aid to learning loses significance because the pupil knows that this information can be readily called up with a few keystrokes. High school students no longer dread term papers: all they need to know now is how to cut and paste. How then should we contextualize our quest for a relevant education system?

The FWWPP has consistently maintained that our teachers are the heart of the Education Revolution, because learning in school is impossible without them. Through our Mentoring the Mentors program, we have sought to make teachers range themselves and their teaching skills against what a student needs to learn to succeed in the globalized 21st-century world.

As teachers and mentors, how do we make our teaching and learning practices responsive to the education needs of today's students?

Priming our students to score well in the National Achievement Tests is—and should be—the bare minimum. Proficiency in Math, Science and English forms the fundamental building blocks upon which real learning takes place.

Beyond the strengthening of these cognitive skills, the teachers, parents and all education stakeholders in the community have to help today's learner distinguish between reliable and unreliable information.

To encourage better reading skills, both the school and the community can foster the creation of rich literate environments, from carefully selected reading materials to educational websites. In doing so, we encourage a deeper approach to learning, as opposed to memorization or surface learning.

In our Mentoring the Mentors sessions, we encourage our teachers to allow students to work in teams where slow and quick learners mingle. That's because the wealth of education research shows that individuals learn better this way. Additionally, students acquire values such as respect, responsibility, honesty and punctuality.

But how do we know if our students are actually learning what is being taught? More importantly, how will the student himself know if he is indeed learning his lessons?

Tests and examinations are integral to the teaching tradition. When administered consistently and properly, they are invaluable learning assessment tools for both the learner and the teacher. Through well-constructed tests, the teacher has the opportunity to precisely determine her students' mastery levels. At the same time, the student gets an accurate gauge of his progress.

Sadly though, many of our teachers need to sharpen their test construction skills. In fact, we have met teachers who use tests to punish students or even entire classes for being noisy. Others ask their students to take "surprise quizzes" to give them something to do while the teacher attends to some other matters. We all have a part to play in improving the learning outcomes of today's Filipino pupils and students.

Teachers need to have access to better and more modern teaching techniques and strategies. But they also must be capable of inspiring an insatiable love for learning in their students, and that is something that cannot be found in any manual or module.

On the other hand, very few things can motivate a teacher better than concerned and caring parents who want the best education possible for their children. This has been proven time and again across social strata.

Likewise, every community has a major stake in their schools because good schools are strong indicators of a healthy and vibrant community. However, a good school only comes to be if the community wills it to be so.

Dr. Evelyn Mejillano is national coordinator of the Mentoring the Mentors program, while Butch Hernandez is the executive director of the Foundation for Worldwide People Power.

THEY SAID

Savior

"In this post-modern age, perhaps he (man) needs a savior all the more, since the society in which he lives has become more complex and the threats to his personal and moral integrity have become more insidious."

—Pope Benedict XVI in his "Urbi et Orbi" (To the City and the World) message

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER LETTERS

Nicole's one last hope

ALTHOUGH I AM OF THE VIEW that a pending appeal means that the legal process is not over (and hence, pursuant to some provisions in the Visiting Forces Agreement, turning over Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith to US custody was the right thing to do), I was disgusted at how Malacañang bent over backwards—nay, bulldozed aside the judicial branch of the government—just to yield to American pressure.

Why didn't it wait for a court order, instead of mounting a "stealth operation" to spring Smith out of jail? As disturbing was the Court of Appeals' craven decision. By deeming the custody issue moot, the appellate court in effect said that the matter was beyond the courts. Whatever happened to the balance and delineation of power in a democracy?

If a Filipino serviceman were convicted in the United States today and sent to jail pending appeal, would George W. Bush ever lift a finger to get his little brown brother out of jail for the sake of good US-Philippine relations? Ah, but not to worry: this episode, too—given the Filipinos' amnesiac sense of history—shall easily fade in the national consciousness as the next series of government scandals and missteps unfold.

All is not lost for Nicole though, as the girl has some bright ideas. When she becomes a US citizen, Uncle Sam will surely fight for her tooth and nail, wherever in the world she may be.

—**REYNARD HING,**
2301 Magnolia St., Sun Valley,
Parañaque City

Yes to Asean community, no to integration

WE, OF THE ALYANSA AGRIKULtura, voice our disappointment with the current direction being taken by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations toward regional integration.

The current model merely mimics and even accelerates the process of trade liberalization, (being pushed by the regional and multilateral agreements) espousing policies which have resulted in loss of livelihood and worsened food insecurity and poverty in the developing countries. This will only add to the Asean processes that exclude a broad segment of the so-called "Asean community" and, not surprisingly, lead to decisions that have little or no regard for the specific needs and interests of agriculture—a sector that directly provides livelihood and sustenance for millions of people in the region.

We believe the time has come for a major paradigm shift. We, therefore, recommend that the Asean:

1. Establish an agri-fishery stakeholders consultation mechanism similar to the Asean Business Advisory Council (Abac). In the spirit of a truly "caring, sharing community" which the Asean claims to promote, the Asean must become more inclusive and institutionalize participation, consultation and transparency in its decision-making as guiding tenets of "the Asean way." Abac represents only one segment of the Asean community. Asean should provide a similar venue for agri-fishery stakeholders.

2. Recognize agriculture's inherent multi-functional role. Agriculture, especially in developing countries, is central to the issues of food security, rural development, biodiversity and climate change. Thus, the Asean talks on agriculture should go beyond trade to include these more fundamental issues.

3. Focus on people, not profits. The current paradigm puts the stress on economic integration, emphasizing profits above all. We believe that it is time to bring people back into the center of the Asean discourse, and put them, not profit, at the top of the Asean agenda.

4. Implement selective, calibrated liberalization based on the demands for food security, livelihood and rural development; taking into account a list of sensitive products, and ready to delay liberalization until competitiveness is achieved. This would ensure that the differing levels of development among the Asean members are considered as well.

5. Align with and strengthen the G-33 (the biggest grouping in the World Trade Organization) which champions the interests of developing countries. The Philippines which, along with Indonesia, has been leading the G-33 should reverse its decision to withdraw from the bloc.

6. Craft a common regional agri-fishery program which incorporates a regional agricultural development fund that could provide support for and develop competitiveness among the agri-fishery sectors within its member-countries.

—**OMI C. ROYANDOYAN,**
president, Alyansa Agrikultura,
Alyansa Agrikultura Secretariat,
c/o Centro Saka Inc., Diliman, QC

Zamboanga benefiting from VFA

THE BALIKATAN EXERCISES BENEfit us here in Zamboanga City. The presence of American forces here has opened up business opportunities for the local business community, and employment for local residents. Besides, The US contingent here also conducts medical and dental missions in barangays that are neglected by our government.

To top it all, the Americans have helped to contain the activities of the Abu Sayyaf terrorists, upgrade our military capabilities and provide intelligence information on the movement of international terrorists in Mindanao. The Visiting Forces Agreement should not be abolished.

—**TONY ITURALDE,**
93 Talon Talon, Zamboanga City

Nation monitoring Bersamin case

THE WELL-PLANNED AND COLD-blooded murder of the Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr. inside the premises of a church in Quezon City on Dec. 16, 2006 is the latest in the series of killings which have claimed the lives of politicians in Abra. If there are obvious similarities—or a pattern—in those killings, why is it that the Philippine National Police and the National Bureau of Investigation cannot solve those murders?

PNP Director General Oscar Calderon has assured the Bersamin family that the murder of Representative Bersamin will be solved. But it is not only the Bersamins who are aggrieved. It is the entire nation. The murder was an assault on our Christian and human values. And the nation wants more than an assurance; it wants the speedy arrest of the mastermind and his henchmen so that peace and order is restored, and justice is meted out.

The nation is monitoring developments on the Bersamin case. We do not want politicians with murderous inclinations ruling Abra and our provinces.

—**RODOLFO DATUIN,**
Novaliches, Quezon City

IF you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of news and photos by the Inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to Nos. 897-4793, 897-4794, or e-mail readersadvocate@ inquirer.com.ph

Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

GMA 'truly the region's angel of death'

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO'S PROposal for an anti-terror pact among Asean countries falls in line with George W. Bush's "surge" policy in Iraq, a policy that is now also pushing for a more aggressive intervention in Somalia and the Horn of Africa.

The Cold War's proxy wars are now being revived in the context of a new clash—that of "civilizations," about which Samuel Huntington wrote to justify to the "American Century" project of the "neoconservatives in Washington. Through Ms Arroyo—although running counter to Speaker Jose de Venecia's proposed "Dialogue of Civilizations" (a concept contradicting his aggressive push for the anti-terror bill)—the Association of Southeast Asian Nations is now being courted to escalate the new Cold War.

The local militants' fear of the revival of legislated mass repression region-wide is not unfounded, considering the ongoing persecution of the communities of resistance in the country. Death will soon be at the doorsteps of those who see and speak. Ms Arroyo is truly this region's angel of death.

—**FERDINAND ANNO,**
Union Theological Seminary,
Pala-pala, Dasmariñas, Cavite

Planet Mars is Earth, we men are the true Martians

COMMENTARY

Art Villasanta

THREE DECADES AGO, A GROUP OF British scholars set out to determine the extent of man's penchant for war. In their search for answers, these intrepid data crunchers manually pored over modern and ancient texts covering 5,000 years of recorded history—from the earliest Mesopotamian civilizations up to the 1970s when the Vietnam War was raging. These researchers discovered that, in all that time, mankind has had only 27 years—an insignificant 27 years—of peace, which they defined as the absence of war anywhere on this planet.

Reading about this in one of the few dailies allowed under martial law so astounded me such that it remains so vivid in my mind to this day. Only 27 years without a war anywhere on this martial planet. Incredible! And hammering home man's seeming thirst for war is fresh research revealing there have only been 26 days of peace out of the 22,000 days from 1945 to 2005.

Our country continues to contribute to the enduring evil of war with its festering twin communist and Muslim insurgencies.

Mankind has never given peace a chance. History proves this, and so do the thousands of wars and armed conflicts, as well as the over a billion deaths they have caused. Sadly, war has always been—and remains—the favored arbiter of disputes between nations or armed groups. It is also the most effective in sowing—as it so often has—the bloody seeds of the next conflict and the one after that.

Witness World War I, the "War to End All Wars," that ignited World War II (history's bloodiest), which then led to the proxy wars between democracy and communism that, in turn, saw Muslims take up the sword in the conflicts that batter today's world. And if one looks at the 19th century, he will see our own revolution against Spain, one of the many wars for independence fought by enslaved peoples against predatory European empires.

Why does man avidly seek to kill? The answers are as complex as the causes of war. But whether one believes the biblical comment that wars begin in men's hearts, or take into account my mother's opinion that most wars are ignited by greed, one cannot escape the reality of war's stranglehold on civilization.

Viewed from this aspect, peace appears to be those rare moments when Mars, the god of war, loosens its relentless choke-hold on mankind's neck. Peace, therefore, is mankind breathing freely.

A New Year has arrived and, with it, the inevitability that there will be no additional days of peace in 2007 to add to those precious 26 days. The wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Chechnya will see to that, as will our own communist insurgency. Then there are those "wars-in-waiting," such as in North Korea, Lebanon, Iran, Taiwan, Russia and Georgia, among others.

A broad look at centuries of warfare reveals that the mutual exhaustion of both combatants—not military victory—has been the chief reason for ending most wars.

The evolution of today's warfare into drawn-out and savage guerrilla conflicts will again confirm this, and will ensure that military victory truly becomes a mirage in the desert.

With military victory all but impossible, there seems little reason why man should go to war at all. But leave it to man to invent reasons to kill his fellowman. George W. Bush and Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction come to mind here.

The commandment "Thou shall not kill" remains the "Eternal Casualty of War"; peace on earth, an empty promise.

This planet doesn't deserve the name, Earth. Mars would be a more fitting name for this blood-soaked rock, and Martians a more exact description of its dominant life form.

Welcome to Mars. And which war do you want to fight in first?

Art Villasanta has been a student of war and mankind's morbid attachment to it for decades. He wrote a website about the Philippines' role in the Korean War at www.geocities.com/peftok and is busy compiling data for a book. He is also working on screenplays about the Philippines' participation in the Korean War.

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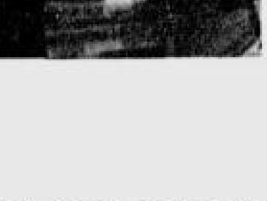

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Regional Office No. V
Legazpi City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO RE-BID FOR GRAINS HANDLING & OTHER RELATED WAREHOUSE HANDLING SERVICES FOR NFA REGION V

The National Food Authority, Regional Office No. V, Legazpi City, through its 2007 Corporate Operating Budget intends to apply the sum of P 18,991,200.00 being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the provision of grains handling and other warehouse related services in Region V for the calendar year 2007 based on the following:

Lot	Province	Location of NFA Warehouses	Estimated Volume to be Handled (Bags)	Estimated No. of Moves	Estimated Budget for the Contract (Php)
1	Albay	Ligao City	100,000	Maximum of 4 moves	P 1,040,000.00
2	Cam. Norte	Daet	276,000	Maximum of 4 moves	P 2,539,200.00
3	Catanduanes	Virac/Pandan	205,000	Maximum of 4 moves	P 2,132,000.00
4	Masbate	Masbate City	340,000	Maximum of 4 moves	p 3,060,000.00
5	Sorsogon	Sorsogon City/Bulan/Irosin/Gubat	280,000	Maximum of 4 moves	P 2,576,000.00
6.	Cam. Sur	Naga City/Ocampo/Iriga/Libmanan'	675,000	Maximum of 4 moves	P 7,020,000.00
	TOTAL		1,876,000		P 18,367,200.00

The prospective bidders are required to submit a Letter of Intent upon payment of a non-refundable application fee amounting to Php 500.00 as basis for the issuance of the eligibility and other pertinent documents required by the Regional Bids and Awards Committee (RBAC):

1. DTI business name / CDA registration and/or SEC registration, whichever may be appropriate;
2. Updated Mayor's permit and Official Receipt;
3. Names of manpower presently utilized for handling services (kabo's & laborers)
4. Eligibility criteria also includes the prospective bidders' largest single contract completed within the last 3 years and similar to the contract to be bid whose value adjusted to current prices using the wholesale consumer price index must be at least 50% of the ABC to be bid. For this purpose, a photocopy of the contract must be submitted for authentication.

The prospective bidders upon complying with the above requirements shall be allowed to purchase the bidder's documents from the RBAC secretariat upon payment of a non-refundable bidding fee of Php 2,000.00/lot.

The bidding of warehouse handling services at NFA Region V Legazpi City shall be governed by RA 9184 and its implementing rules and regulation.

The venue of bidding activities will be held on the 2nd Floor of the NFA regional office, Pier Site, Legazpi City on the following schedule:

ACTIVITY	DATE	TIME
1. Submission of letter of intent and issuance of eligibility requirements	January 8-17, 2007	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
2. Deadline for submission of eligibility requirements	January 18, 2007	5:00 p.m.
3. Deadline for the issuance of Certificate of Eligibility	January 19, 2007	5:00 p.m.
4. Issuance of bid application and bid documents	January 9, 2007	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
5. Pre-bid Conference	January 24, 2007	10:00 a.m.
6. Submission of bid documents/opening of bid	February 6, 2007	9:00 a.m.

For further inquiries, please contact the RBAC Chairman or Secretariat at NFA Legazpi City with telephone Nos. (052) 480-7933; 820-0018; 480-7015.

THE NFA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS THEREOF, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITIES OR DEFECTS FOUND THEREIN, OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS OR TO AWARD TO ANY CONTRACTOR WHOSE BID IS CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE NFA OR TO THE GOVERNMENT.

(Sgd.) JOSE B. GUEVARA
RBAC, Chairman

(PDI – January 9 & 15, 2007)

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Tsunami scare grips N. Samar town

By Joey A. Gabieta
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE IN CATARMAN, Northern Samar, abandoned their homes on Saturday night and sought refuge in places they thought were safe as a tsunami scare engulfed the provincial capital.

Fearing that their town would be hit by the tsunami, said to be a result of an 8.2 magnitude earthquake that hit Japan's northern coast in the Pacific on Saturday, the people began to panic, went out of their houses and occupied the streets of Catarman, including the Catholic cathedral, according to provincial board member Marites Gillamac.

"I myself was asked by a neighbor to leave [my] house because the town would be hit by a tsunami. Thank God it did not happen as I knew it would not," she told the INQUIRER.

Gillamac, who was not persuaded to leave their house in Barangay Dalakit, said she based her reaction on an advisory by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) that the tremor that hit Japan would not spin off any tsunami.

"Still, several people went out to the streets and some even went inside the Catarman Cathedral ... seeking safety," Gillamac, reached on her mobile phone, said.

She said the people began leaving their homes at around 6 p.m. and brought personal belongings and even kitchenware with them. Several streets were occupied with people, some in their vehicles.

The people stayed even on the runway of the domestic airport, Gillamac added.

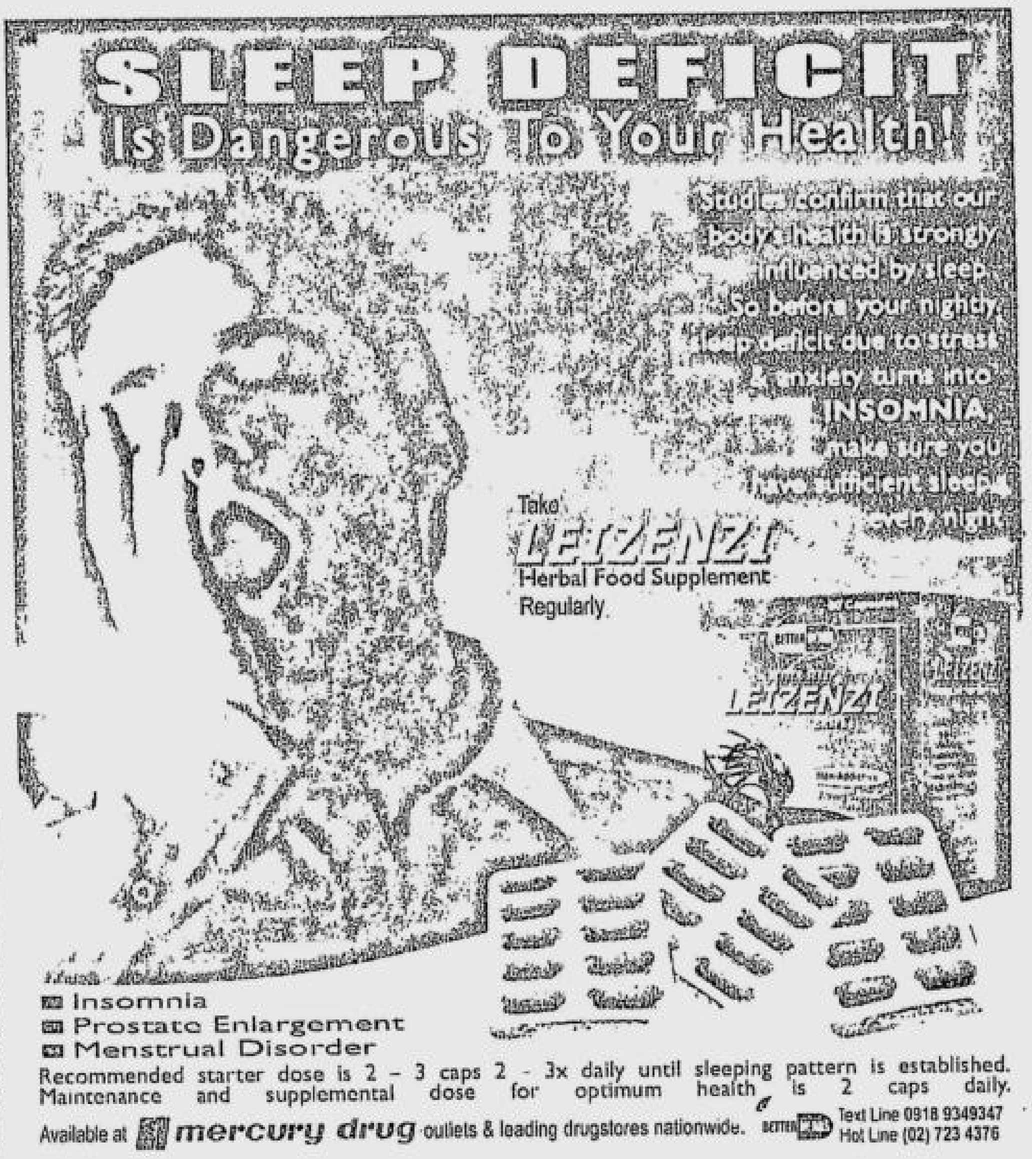
"There was also information that some people went to the mountains within the University of Eastern Philippines (UEP)," the provincial official said.

According to her, the panic could have started when the water level of the Catarman River suddenly receded several meters from the banks and flowed into the sea.

The river crosses through the town proper, behind the public market, before it empties into the sea.

The receding of the waters came just hours after the tremor hit Japan.

The people were only persuaded to return home at past 8 p.m. when a local radio station announced that the tsunami alert issued by the Phivolcs had been lifted, Gillamac said.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ASEAN SECURITY "EM ZAMOR"
A child looks apprehensive at riot policemen deployed to secure the Cebu International Convention Center where the 12th Asean summit is being held.

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Only quality products during flower festival

By Desiree Caluza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—ORGANIZERS of the annual "Panagbenga Flower Festival" here said they were tapping the resources of the foreign community and the Cordillera provinces so they can exhibit their best products instead of mostly street food that had dominated the event for the last 10 years.

Anthony de Leon, president of the Hotels and Restaurants Association of Baguio (HRAB), said the festival had been receiving flak from tourists because it did not present a Cordillera character during the "Session Road in Bloom" event.

He said tourists had complained about hot dogs, barbecue and other food roasted on the streets during the festival.

"Session Road in Bloom," a weeklong activity which requires the city to close a stretch of Session Road to vehicular traffic, is one of the highlights of the Panagbenga. The festival has attracted tourists because of its street dancers.

"There will be no more hot dogs, *isaw* (innards), *mais* (corn) and *tiangge* (flea market) [along Session Road]. We will be very strict in screening products which are appropriate to the theme," De Leon said in a forum here.

Organizers have also decided to replace street concerts, featuring popular Manila and local rock bands with orchestras.

They said they wanted the "regional flavor of the North" and the international flavors to take center stage on Session Road when it is closes starting Feb. 26.

De Leon said the organizers would make sure that exhibitors from Ilocos Sur, Pampanga, La Union, Tarlac, Pangasinan and the Cordillera would reflect the theme of the flower festival.

Establishments are encouraged to promote French, Spanish, Japanese and other international cuisines, he said.

He said the decision to showcase high-profile products should not be perceived as "elitist" by barring sidewalk vendors from participating.

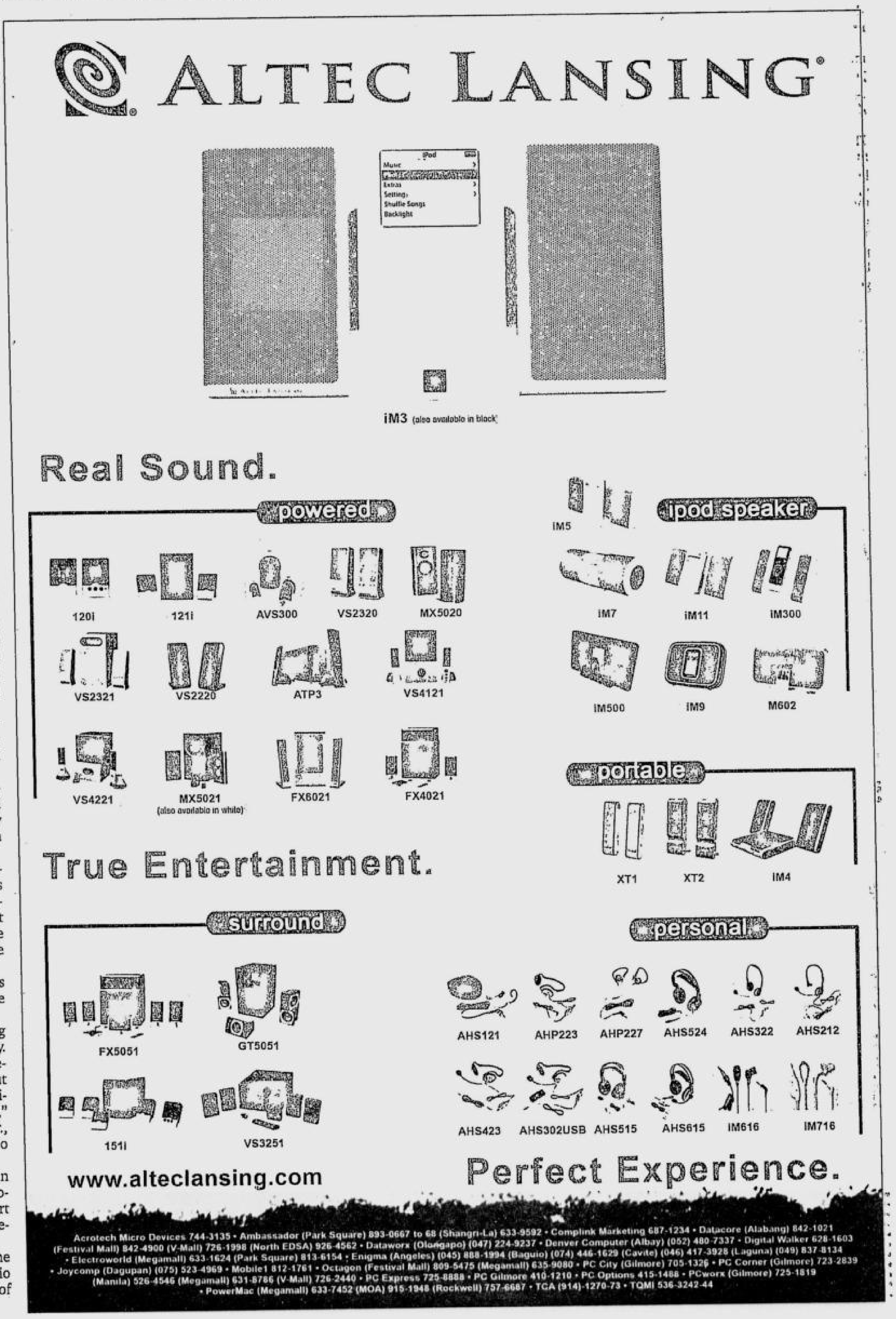
"Just because we are presenting international flavors, it does not mean that they are not *pangmasa* (for the masses). We want to upgrade the standards of the people by giving them a unique experience," he said.

He said the new strategy aims to attract more tourists to the city.

"We want to stage something that will surprise the community. In the past, Session Road just became a flea market of sorts. But now, we want to give [new] motivations for tourists to come up," said lawyer Damaso Bangaoet Jr., executive chair of the Baguio Flower Festival Foundation Inc.

He said "Session Road in Bloom" was going to be the prototype for the city's plan to convert downtown into a huge promenade area.

Air quality experts place the highest concentration of Baguio pollutants along this stretch of Session Road.



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Iloilo governor vows to defy dismissal order

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—A SHOWDOWN looms at the Iloilo provincial capitol after Iloilo Gov. Niel Tupas Sr. vowed to defy a dismissal order related to graft charges expected to be served today by the Department of Interior and Local Government.

"I cannot follow an illegal order and I will not step down. Never," Tupas told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

Tupas said he did not know what offense he has committed and the case that was used as the basis of the dismissal order.

The DILG was expected to implement today the dismissal from office of Tupas after the Ombudsman issued a decision finding the governor guilty of graft charges.

DILG Undersecretary Wencelito Andanar said his office received a decision from the Ombudsman last Friday ordering Tupas' dismissal for graft.

The dismissal order was among those sent to the DILG office along with the orders to suspend Batangas Gov. Armand Sanchez for corruption charges and for several other local officials.

Andanar, who is in Cebu attending the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) summit, said he did not know of the details of the case against Tupas because he left for Cebu on Thursday.

"We will come out with our implementation order based on the Ombudsman decision on Monday," Andanar said in a telephone interview.

Virginia Palanca-Santiago, Deputy Ombudsman-Visayas said she did not know what case was used as the basis of the dismissal order.

"The governor has many pending cases and we had forwarded our findings and recommendations to our central office which is the one that announces the findings," Santiago said in a telephone interview. She refused to give the details of the cases because several of them are still under investigation.

Tupas said he would accept a copy of the Ombudsman's decision if it was served at his office but not a dismissal order.

The governor said he would not vacate his post because under the rules of the Ombudsman, he is given 15 days to file a motion for reconsideration. He said he has also the option to question the order in court by filing for a petition for review.

Tupas said the dismissal is a case of "political persecution and harassment" because of his close association with former Senate President Franklin Drilon.

The two, along with the Drilon bloc in the Liberal Party, broke ties with President Macapagal-Arroyo and called for her resignation on July 2005 at the height of the political crisis stemming from the allegations of electoral fraud in the 2004 elections against the President.

He said the administration also resorted to this move because it could not field any candidate to run against him in the May elections.

The governor blamed Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, a staunch ally of the President, for instigating the dismissal order.

"He (Gonzalez) wants to lord over the province as well because he already is in control of Iloilo City," said Tupas.

Gonzalez denied any knowledge of the order.

"Why blame me? It was the Ombudsman who issued the decision, not my office. There's no logic there," said Gonzalez in a telephone interview.

DENNIS JAY SANTOS/INQUIRER MINDANAO

TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT
These migratory birds are regularly seen frequenting a drained fishpond in Barangay Bincungan, Tagum City, which is near residential area. The government recently raised its alert for the possible entry to the country of the bird flu virus that had stricken various parts of Asian countries in past years.

BIR exec under probe denies wrongdoing

DAVAO CITY—THE OFFICIAL OF THE Bureau of Internal Revenue here, who was charged with graft by the Revenue Integrity Protection Service (RIPS) of the Department of Finance, denied any wrongdoing.

The RIPS said that based on its investigation, Marites Nartatez has accumulated unexplained wealth although her annual salary is only about P200,000.

In 1990, the agency said, Nartatez's net worth was only P218,320, which increased to P335,000 in 1991.

The RIPS said their investigation also showed that the BIR official had accumulated P30 million in recent years.

Nartatez, through her lawyer Ramon Edison Batacan, has welcomed the charge against her saying it would help her clear her name.

But the investigation conducted by the RIPS was allegedly based on pure speculation and guesswork.

"The investigation is deplorable as it denied our client due process. It [did not only violate] her constitutional rights but the outcome thereof speculative if not totally ridiculous," Batacan said in a statement.

Batacan said the findings of the investigation itself belie the existence of unexplained wealth.

"How can a car worth P90,000 and jewelry valued at P45,000 be considered as wealth, much less, unexplained?" Batacan pointed out.

The car, a Mitsubishi L200 van now in "disrepair," was bought on installment and paid out of income from the earnings of the business of Nartatez's husband according to Batacan.

He said Nartatez's husband, a former employee of a pharmaceutical company, manages his own "lechon manok" business, with 20 stores all over Davao City.

The business, which started in 1995, has an annual gross income of P30 million, he said.

"The manner by which the investigation was conducted and the haste in revealing the results to the media all the more gives rise to suspicion that the said RIPS is only after media mileage to drum up accomplishment," Batacan said.

He said if RIPS was serious in running after corrupt government officials, "it should have filed the same charges against all DOF and BIR employees sporting flashy cars and wearing expensive watches and jewelry." *Jeffrey Tupas, Inquirer Mindanao*

ROUNDUP

Consular offices pushed

DAVAO CITY—Councilor Peter Laviña has filed a resolution urging South Korea to establish a consular office in the city. Laviña on Tuesday also called on China to reopen its consular office here, which was shut down in 1974. There have been a growing number of South Koreans and Chinese in the city, some of them studying or doing business. About 400 South Koreans live in the city and they have to fly to Manila or Cebu to have their documents updated or processed. Laviña said South Korea and China have also become aggressive partners of the Philippines in tourism, trade and socio-cultural aspects. He said the presence of a consul here could also strengthen the city's ties with its sister city of Nanning in China. Mayor Rodrigo Duterte has forged the sisterhood agreement with the mayor of Nanning last year. "It will also be a welcome development for the airline that opened a direct flight between Davao and Korea and Macau," he said. Only Japan, Malaysia and Indonesia have consulates in the city while Palau, the Czech Republic and Spain have honorary consuls.

Rizalene Acac, Inquirer Mindanao

Rebels burn tractors

BACOLOD CITY—A landowner who refused to pay "revolutionary" taxes to the New People's Army lost two farm tractors after these were burned down by suspected rebels in Barangay Caduha-an, Cadiz City, 65.2 km north of here. Lt. Col. Felicito Budiongan, commander of the Army's Task Force North operating in Negros Occidental, said about 25 NPA guerrilas, including three women, swooped down on the sugar plantation of Betty Montinola on Jan. 7, set fire on two farm tractors and took the farm's radio base and cellular phones of the farm workers. Budiongan said in the past, two other tractors owned by Montinola, in Barangay San Isidro, E.B.Magalona town and in Cadiz City, had also been gutted by suspected rebels. Insurgents had also raided her fishponds in Barangay Madalag, E.B. Magalona, he said.

Carla P. Gomez, Inquirer Visayas

Negros village chief slain

BACOLOD CITY—A village chief of Silay City, Negros Occidental was shot dead at the fish port in Barangay Banago, Bacolod City at about 4:30 a.m. Thursday. Balaring barangay captain Victor Diamante, 53, was shot in the nape and was declared dead on arrival at the Riverside Medical Center here. His assailant, identified as Emiliano Saballa Paes Jr., 60, of Barangay Tanza, E.B. Magalona town, remained at large. Police said that prior to the shooting, Diamante, a wholesale fish dealer, and Paes engaged in a heated argument when the latter took a handful of shrimps from the victim's tub.

Carla P. Gomez, Inquirer Visayas

Port hits P9-B surplus

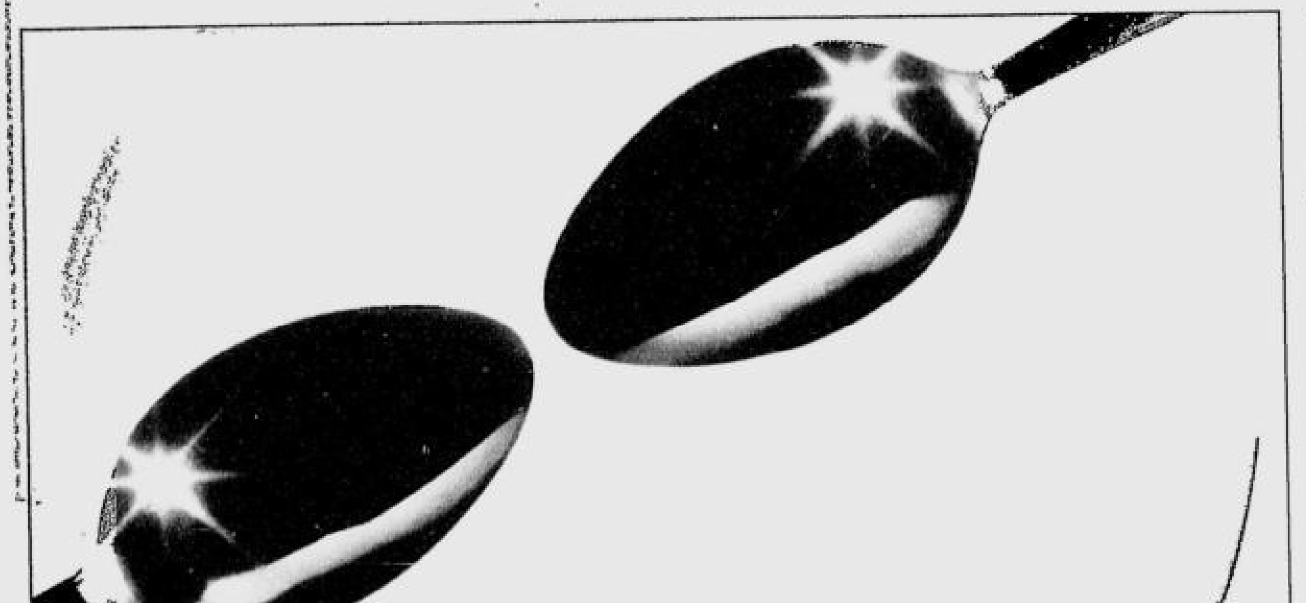
BATANGAS CITY—Despite the significant decrease in oil imports, an official of the Port of Batangas (POB) on Tuesday said it had registered P9.2-billion surplus in its collections last year, topping the aggregate surplus collections that the port enjoyed in the past nine years. Gracia Zuño-Caringal, POB district collector, said their actual collection of P40.9 billion for 2006 was 29 percent higher than their target collection of P31.6 billion.

Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon

New Laguna police chief

STA. CRUZ, Laguna—Just two days before a ban on reassignment of police officials in the country, the Laguna police office welcomed its new director on Friday. In a simple rite at the Laguna police office here, Senior Supt. Felipe Rojas was installed as the new provincial police chief, replacing Senior Supt. Luisito de Leon. Rojas, a member of Class 1981 of the Philippine Military Academy, was a former police chief of San Pablo City. His assignment at the Laguna police is said to be a "personal request" of Gov. Teresita "Ningning" Lazaro to Philippine National Police chief Director General Oscar Calderon.

Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon



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Legal team formed to help prosecute Chinese poachers

ENVIRONMENTAL LAWYERS ON Friday formed a group that would help prosecute Chinese fishermen caught encroaching on the Tubbataha Reefs National Marine Park last December.

Lawyer Antonio Oposa Jr. said a group of "high-powered" legal counsels had been organized to help the Tubbataha Management Office (TMO) in their battle to end poaching and guard the protected marine park from abuse.

In a meeting at The Fort in Taguig City, members of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines-National Environment Action Team (IBP-NEAT), the Philippine Bar Association (PBA) and other concerned individuals agreed to draft a framework and protocol on how to handle poaching and other illegal fishing activities.

"We will develop a legal protocol so the concerned agencies will know how to react to such cases as poaching," he told the INQUIRER.

Park protection

Oposa, also the chair of the IBP-NEAT, said medium-term and long-term programs had been set to help protect the Tubbataha Reefs.

He said the group would first focus on the prosecution of cases filed against the Chinese fishermen who were freed on Tuesday after posting bail.

He raised concern over the decision of a Palawan Regional Trial Court judge to release the Chinese. "This can't go on. We are being bullied by these Chinese fishermen because we have allowed ourselves to be bullied," he said in a mobile phone interview.

"We want to send a message that we have a collective will to prevent the recurrence of this incident."

Among the lawyers who pledged support were Linda Jimeno, PBA president; Siegfried Fortun; Victor Lazatin; Benjamin Tabios of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources; Gerthie Anda of the TMO; Maritess Sison; Don Artes, Raul Paras and Gary Jimenez from the office of Sen. Jamby Madrigal; and Arlene Mendoza and Karen Baydo of the IBP-NEAT.

Oposa said lawyer Oscar Embido, chief of the Anti-Organized Crime Task Force of the National Bureau of Investigation, had also committed to help the group.

Boat released

On Thursday, the INQUIRER learned that a Palawan judge had also recommended the release of another boat owned by Chinese fishermen and loaded with stuffed turtles after ordering the release of the 24 Chinese poachers.

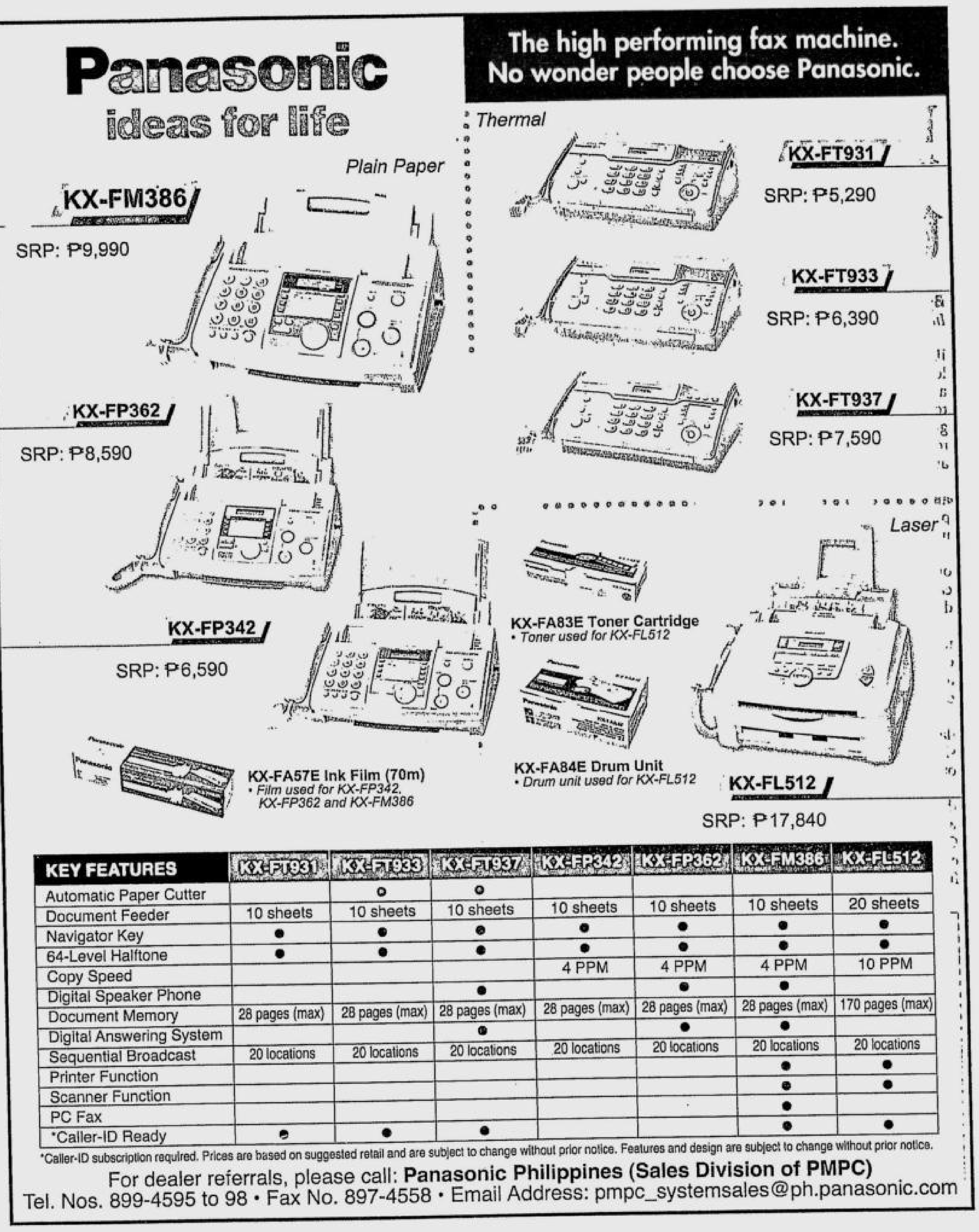
Angelique Songco, TMO manager, said Judge Torribio Ilao of RTC Branch 52 issued the release order for the King King Hai boat to its captain, a certain Chuang Huang Dhu.

Ilao's sala is assigned to the environment court in Palawan, also known as the last bastion of untouched natural resources in the country.

The boat was released on the same day that Ilao ordered authorities to free the 24 Chinese from the provincial jail.

Those released were among the 30 crew members of a boat apprehended by TMO personnel while illegally entering the protected Tubbataha park on Dec. 21, 2006.

Songco said the King King Hai was intercepted on June 17, 2006 off Mangsee Island in Balabac, Palawan. *Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon*



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NATIONAL CANCER CONSCIOUSNESS WEEK

"2nd National Hospice and Palliative Care Convention"

January 25, 2007 • Century Park Hotel, Malate, Manila

Philippine Cancer Society

50 Years

Winning the Cancer Challenge

It has been an uphill fight defeating cancer for half a century. We honor the individuals who started, built, kept and lead the Philippine Cancer Society, we salute and give honor to the heroic efforts of those men and women who made a great difference in touching the lives of others. If not for them, we would not be where we are now 50 years of advancing knowledge about cancer, combating the spread of the disease and bringing relief to those afflicted with cancer.

The Philippine Cancer Society was founded on the vision of a nation largely spared from the scourge of cancer. Recognizing that the disease was not just a techno-medical issue for scientists to resolve, the founders emphasized public awareness and education, and advocacy up to the highest echelons of public health policy formulation. They saw that, as a resource-limited nation, the key component in the battle against cancer should be prevention and early detection. At the same time, the Society was also involved in the humanitarian aspect of caring for the afflicted as well as research by establishing one of the earliest population-based registries in Southeast Asia.

The first step towards the establishment of the Philippine Cancer Society was taken on December 15, 1956 at the Philippine Columbian Clubhouse in Taft Avenue Manila. The Incorporators who worked hard to set up the PCS were: Dr. Antonio Del Castillo, Dr. Francisco C. Guzman, Dr. Paulino J. Garcia, Dr. Constantino P. Manahan, Dr. Carmelo Reyes, Dr. Juan Z. Sta. Cruz, Dr. Jose Y. Fores, Dr. Fernando D. Manalo, Dr. Sofia Bona de Santos, Dr. Luis F. Torres, Dr. Basilio J. Valdes, Dr. Elpidio Valencia, Dr. Miguel Canizares, Mrs. Dolores Paterno de Tunson, Brig. Gen. Hans M. Menzi

PCS is a private non-stock, non-profit organization registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission on December 22, 1956. The Society was finally incorporated on February 13, 1957. In 1967, the Society was certified as a science foundation by the National Science Technology Authority (now the Department of Science and technology). In 2000, it received a certificate of accreditation from the Philippine Council for Non-Government Organizations Certification. In 2001, the Society was likewise accredited by the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

The Society is one of the pioneering organizations that has launched significant projects and services in cancer prevention, control and management in the country. In 1957, the Society established the first private cancer detection and diagnostic center. The center operated for almost 30 years and served more than 100,000 indigent patients. In the early 1960's, the Society purchased a complete diagnostic X-ray unit and eventually the first X-ray therapy unit. In the 1970's, the first special clinic for breast and cervical cancers was established and the Society fielded its first mobile clinics designed primarily to screen for early detection of breast and cervical cancers.

In 1959, the Society's Statistical and Research Committee initiated the collection of cancer cases from hospitals. In 1968, the Central Tumor Registry was formally set up providing the only source of cancer statistics then. This group later evolved into the population-based PCS-Manila Cancer Registry which to this day continues to be a main source of data for direction setting in public health programs. These statistics are recognized nationally and internationally.

The Society started its first anti-smoking campaign during its first year in 1957 Today, laws and local ordinances ban smoking in public places and control advertisements. In 1990, the Society created a Hospice Care Program that performed pain and symptom control and counseling to indigent, terminally-ill cancer patients. Though the Society no longer run its hospice care program today, it succeeded to inspire more than 30 hospitals and community-based hospice groups to form their own hospice units, hence, the formation of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Council of the Philippines. The PCS was also among the first to bring cancer pain to the agenda table of national health authorities.

The Society first introduced the Relay For Life (RFL) in 2004, a signature fundraising activity of the American Cancer Society (ACS). Now on its 3rd year, the Philippine RFL will be held on February 23 & 24, 2007 in Quezon City. In 2004, the Society also pioneered a fundraising project, the "Best Dressed Women of the Philippines." The next BDWOP will be held on September of this year.

The Society takes the lead in the upcoming international events; the 7th Asia Pacific Hospice Conference on September 27-29, 2007 and the 8th Asian Clinical Oncology Society Congress in 2008.

These are just few of the many undertakings of the Society that has created great impact to various entities and moves them to get involved in cancer work. To this day, the Society prides itself on its extensive programs that concentrate on education and information, advocacy campaigns and networking with others, focusing on prevention of specific preventable cancers, early detection of treatable cancers and the reduction of the suffering caused by cancer when it strikes, thru service and research.

Fifty years since PCS' founding, the challenge looms larger than ever. Public health concern has, to a large degree, shifted from infectious diseases to the chronic ones. Cancer is now the second leading cause of mortality among Filipinos.

The Society however is no longer one of a few lone wolves howling in the darkness. Many groups have joined to form a chorus. A broad front composed of non-government and government organizations, support groups, various medical societies, and hospices has emerged and continues to grow.

As the Society's Golden Anniversary approaches, we reflect on the heroic and benevolent acts of all the people who helped and continued to support the Society in its entire endeavor in beating cancer over half a century!

WINNING THE CANCER CHALLENGE WILL TAKE TIME AND A LOT MORE EFFORT. THE SOCIETY WILL CONTINUE TO DO MORE IN THE NEXT 50 YEARS!

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Executive Director

PROGRAM of ACTIVITIES

08.00 – 09.00 H Registration
09.00 – 09.10 H National Anthem/Doxology
09.10 – 09.15 H Welcome Remarks
Dr. Roberto M. Paterno
Chairman
Philippine Cancer Society
09.20 – 09.30 H Key Note Speaker
Hon. Francisco T. Duque III
Secretary of Health
09.30 – 10.15 H Updates on Hospice in the Region
Dr. Rosalie Shaw
Executive Director
Asia Pacific Hospice Network
10:15 – 10:30 H Coffee Break
10:30— 11:00 H Pain as a Fifth Vital Sign
Dr. Henry U. Lu
President
Pain Society of the Philippines
11.00 – 11.45 H Hospice Home Care and Hospital
Dr. Andrew E. Ang
Consultant
UP-PGH
11.45 – 12.00 H Open Forum
12.00 – 13.00 H Lunch Break

13.00 – 13.45 H Hospice Home Care in the Community Setting
Dr. Rhodora Ocampo
Executive Director
Madre de Amor Hospice Foundation
13.45 – 14.30 H How to Handle Burn Out
Dr. Rosalie Shaw
Executive Director
Asia Pacific Hospice Network
14.30 – 15.00 H Coffee Break
15.00 – 15.45 Estate Planning
Ms. Divina Garcia
Tax Consultant
Hospice Philippines
15.45 – 16.00 Open Forum
16.00 – 16.30 Closing Remarks
Mr. Luzmindo B. Fajardo
Executive Director
Philippine Cancer Society

2007 National Cancer Consciousness Week

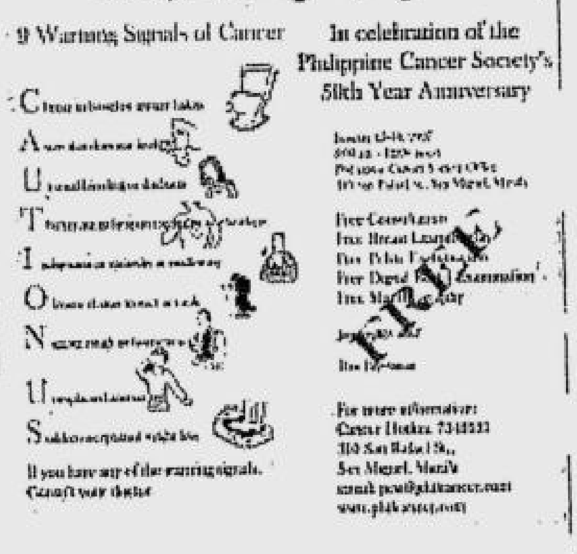
Department of Health

50 Years
Winning the Cancer Challenge

"Winning the Cancer Challenge through Healthy Lifestyle"

9 Warning Signals of Cancer

In celebration of the Philippine Cancer Society's 50th Year Anniversary



If you have any of the warning signals, Consult your doctor

Department of Health and Philippine Cancer Society 2007 National Cancer Consciousness Campaign

January Kick-Off	- Every 3rd week of January
February	- Diet and Exercise Awareness Month
March	- Colon and Rectal Awareness Month
April	- Cancer in Children Awareness Month
May	- Cervical Cancer Awareness Month
June	- Prostate Cancer Awareness Month
July	- Lung Cancer Awareness Month
August	- Lung Cancer Awareness Month
September	- Liver Cancer Awareness Month
October	- Breast Cancer Awareness Month
November	- Cancer Pain Management Awareness Month
December	- Thanksgiving Month

China next major destination of Filipino workers

By Ronnel W. Domingo

CEBU—THE CHINESE MAINland may become another major destination for Filipino workers after China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations yesterday signed an agreement on trade in services (TIS) aimed at expanding the two-way movement of skills and talent.

To be in force by July 2007, the TIS pact is part of the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and would extend to services and service providers from a sending country to that nationals' treatment in the accepting country.

This means, for example, that a Filipino teacher who will work in China would be treated like a local teacher in terms of professional status and would not be required to secure permits usually required of foreign workers.

Donald G. Dee, special envoy for international trade negotiations, said in an interview the signing of the TIS pact would open up vast opportunities for Filipinos as China had a growing need of health care workers, nurses, engineers, architects and even lawyers and accountants with experience in the international environment.

"This would work well as we push for a comprehensive mutual recognition arrangement within Asean," Dee said. "We can offer more world-quality workers aside from nurses and engineers."

Sectors covered in the agreement include computer-related jobs, real estate services, market research and management consulting, construction and engineering, tourism and travel, transport, education, telecommunications, health-related and social services, recreational, cultural and sporting services, environment and energy.

Further negotiations

China and Asean are set to engage in further negotiations over the next year on a new round of commitments as well as additional service sub-sectors that would be liberalized.

During the Asean-China Summit held here yesterday, Premier Wen Jiabao said China would work closely with Asean members in promoting exchanges of teachers, students, youth volunteers and athletes, as well as on the mutual recognition of degrees and diplomas issued by China and Asean governments.

"We need each other in our respective development endeavors and we are bound by common interests," Wen said.

Francis Chua, president of the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Inc., said more substantial benefits were expected from an agreement to be signed today between the Commission on Higher Education and China's Ministry of Education.

"China prefers to develop its own professionals but at this point it is open to tapping expertise from outside," Chua said. "These agreements would increase deployment to China of Filipinos with technical savvy, managerial skills and health-related know-how."

Events organizers needed

Further, Chua said, Filipino event organizers were favored for projects by multinationals operating in the mainland.

"With the signing of the agreements, employment of these people is sure to rise even more with the upcoming 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai," Chua said.

But he added that Filipino talents may not even need to go to China as the Chinese themselves have been coming to the Philippines for training.

"In fact, St. Paul University in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan, is already operating a school mainly for nursing students from the mainland," Chua said.

Through various education missions sent to China in the past three years, counterpart agencies of the Philippines and China have partnered to accommodate Chinese teachers and students in short-term training programs in Philippine schools.

China, Asean move closer to free trade

From page A1

peoples is within reach," an elated Ms Arroyo said in a statement issued a day after concluding the Asean summit that she described as "productive."

"With the Asean moving forward toward firm accords on its own charter, security, overseas workers and trade, the prospect for the region becoming a formidable bloc in the world is well within our reach," Ms Arroyo said.

"From a sharing and caring community, we can become a dynamo as the hub and core of East Asia, immersed in robust, open trade from within the region and across the oceans—building security and prosperity in millions of communities from East to West."

Closer integration

"The unequivocal commitment and common spirit of the leaders of the region have carved out an unprecedented road map of Asean community toward closer integration and greater heights of achievement by 2015, backed by enhanced economic, political and sociocultural partnerships," said the President.

The President said the 10 participating leaders had agreed to uphold the "centrality of Asean" as envisioned in the Cebu Declaration on the blueprint for the Asean charter. "We acknowledged that Asean must remain cohesive with strong institutions and responsive policies for regional community building," she said.

Before Asean members sat down yesterday to continue negotiations with China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand, Ms Arroyo exhorted the dialogue partners to push for the early conclusion of the free trade agreements (FTA).

East Asia summit

"These FTAs taken together will deepen East Asian economic integration which will benefit the peoples of the region," the President said.

On the start of the Second East Asia Summit (EAS) meeting today, Ms Arroyo said she looked forward to the signing of the Cebu Declaration on East Asian Energy Security which would help shape a common regional policy for energy issues.

"We agreed on the need to strengthen cooperation with other EAS partners and reaffirmed that the Asean plus three process would be the main vehicle toward achieving an East Asian community," she said.

'Balancing role'

China's Premier Wen Jiabao, the first to hold a summit with the Asean leaders, was hoping to use the meetings to bolster Beijing's regional clout. Japan, South Korea and India—equally eager to expand trade—are also trying to keep a high profile.

According to draft statements on the talks, Asean:

- Expressed support for India's "Look East" policy, and suggested that Southeast Asia play a "balancing role" between the emerging economic powerhouses of India and China. It also expressed support for a Free Trade Agreement between India and Asean member states.
- Wanted to bolster its relations with East Asia, particularly in poverty eradication, disaster management and developing mineral resources.
- Expressed concern over the spread of bird flu and the need for greater preparedness.
- Welcomed the inauguration of South Korea's Ban Ki-moon as secretary general of the United Nations.

The security situation on the Korean Peninsula was also on the table.

Along with Asean meetings, the leaders of Japan, China and South Korea met separately and then again together for a three-party summit.

The East Asian countries are trying to find a way to persuade North Korea to return to international talks aimed at getting it to abandon its nuclear weapons program. The most recent round of multilateral talks on the issue broke down without progress last month in Beijing.

'A blight on our dream'

A statement issued after the Asean-South Korea summit said Ms Arroyo expressed "solidarity" with efforts to solve the standoff through talks. "The nuclear test of North Korea casts a blight on our dream of one caring and sharing community," she said in the statement.

She added in a statement prepared for the Asean-Japan summit that the region hopes North Korea's Oct. 9 nuclear test would not inspire an arms race, particularly with Tokyo.

"It may be tempting for Japan to consider becoming a nuclear weapons state," the statement said. "But the possession of nuclear weapons by more countries in our region will only lead to greater risks, not less."

The Beijing-Tokyo-Seoul meeting provided a chance for the three neighbors to mend ties damaged by disputes over several small islands, oil drilling rights and visits by Japanese leaders to a Tokyo war shrine seen by many as a symbol of Japanese militarism.

It was their first trilateral meeting in two years.

"I would like to make an effort to keep holding summits with China and South Korea and also to build up better communication and trust with both nations," Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said afterward.

Market of 1.8B people

Plans were set in 2002 for a free trade area with China that will create a huge consumer market and economic activity totaling more than US$2 trillion.

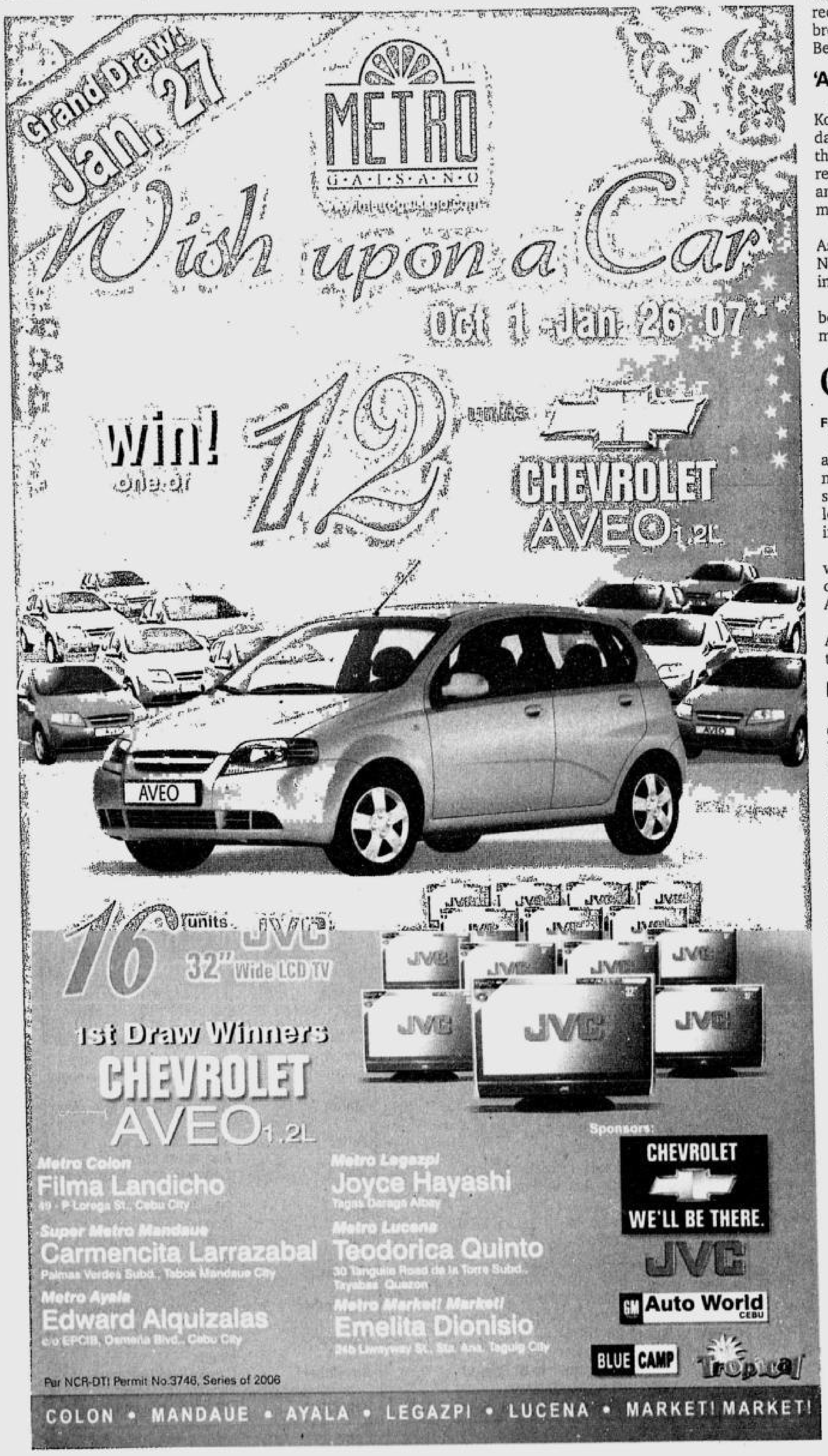
In his opening remarks, Chinese Premier Wen said tariffs for more than 7,000 items had been lowered and the bilateral China-Asean trade volume reached US$160 billion in 2006—an increase of 23.4 percent from the previous year.

"In the past year, cooperation in all fields has been carried out in a down-to-earth manner with obvious achievements," he said. "China is very satisfied."

Ms Arroyo described China as Asean's "big brother" with an "important and strategic role to play in the economic development and security situation of the Asia-Pacific region."

"We also look to China to take the lead in promoting good neighborly relations and regional cooperation by handling sensitive issues with surrounding countries in a manner that is guided by the spirit of equality, respect, consultation and mutual benefit."

Ms Arroyo then convened the Asean-Korea meeting where she focused on the need to "exhaust all peaceful means to keep the Korean Peninsula nuclear-free and our region safe and secure." *With an AP report*



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Capiz sees potential market ...

From page A1

alization of the trade between Asean and China," said Rodolfo C. Severino, former Asean secretary general and now senior research fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore.

"I think opening up the services sector would facilitate trade in general ... so this is quite an important agreement," he told Agence France Presse.

As a first step toward a free trade area, Asean and China signed an agreement on trade in goods in November 2004.

Eventual integration

Liao Shaolian, deputy director of the Southeast Asia research center at China's Xiamen University, said these deals were important for the eventual integration of Asian markets.

"China and Asean would have a better framework for the protection of trade ... the economies would be more integrated and the service industries could grow more stably too," he said.

Higher level

Wen said Asean and Beijing would "advance bilateral cooperation to an even higher level" in the coming year.

"Politically high-level contacts between the two sides have been close and dialogue and consultation at all levels have been fruitful and effective," he told Asean leaders.

Asean has much to gain

With China now attracting much of the foreign investment that used to flow into Asean economies, there are some fears that closer trade links could be more of a threat than an opportunity.

But Asean countries have much to gain, Severino said.

"The rise of China is not a zero-sum game and China is beginning to invest in Asean countries too," Severino said.

"Some complain about the influx of Chinese goods ... but they mustn't forget that Southeast Asia has a surplus with China. The balance of trade is in Southeast Asia's favor."

Asean's top exports to China include electrical equipment, machinery, fuel and oil, plastics and rubber—mostly intermediate materials for China's exports of manufactured goods to third countries.

With China's economic expansion and the free trade zone in place, the country is expected to import more of these products from Asean as its manufacturing continues to grow, experts say.

Regional leaders have also sought to ease worries.

China not a threat

"What we always believe (is) that China has not been a threat ... We have always regarded China as an opportunity," Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi told reporters last October at a China-Asean summit.

Under a $25-billion deal announced at that summit, Malaysian state energy firm Petronas will supply some 3 million tons of natural gas annually to Shanghai over the next 25 years.

For many manufacturers in the Philippines, the impending free trade pact means they must rise to the challenge of cheaper Chinese competition.

"The happy days are over," said Richard Tiu, chair of industries at the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"They have to be more creative and efficient ... each entrepreneur has to know how to find a niche."

In Cebu City, Melanie Fernandez sources nearly half the merchandise in her fashion accessories shop from China these days, because it makes good business sense.

"Lipsticks, stockings, combs ... these are all made in China and they are much cheaper than goods we stocked previously from Japan, which were quite expensive," Fernandez said at her shop in a trendy downtown shopping center. "We want more cheap goods. They satisfy our customer demand."

But China also needs resources to fuel its industries.

At a breakfast forum in Roxas City Friday, Emmanuel Ang, the Philippine commercial attaché to Guangdong, noted that China's richest province was importing nearly $200 billion worth of products and services a year.

China has a ready market for agricultural and marine products that can be explored by Capiceño producers, according to Ang.

To secure its supply of raw materials for its industries, China is also investing in the Philippines and other Asean members.

Ang said China's private sector investments in the Philippines worth P250 million were under final negotiations.

These are in ethanol production, logistics, transportation, services exports, mining and agri-marine sectors. *Reports from Felipe V. Celino, Inquirer Visayas; AFP and Reuters*

INVESTING IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL CHILDREN FOR AN INTELLIGENT AND HEALTHY CITIZENRY

By *Rep. Herminio G. Teves* (3rd District, Oriental Negros)

A properly nourished and physically fit citizenry is vital to nation-building and economic growth. Recognizing this, government has to provide a mechanism that will ensure that our human resources -- future labor force participants -- are not languishing due to hunger. The House of Representatives sought to check pervasive hunger, especially among children, by allotting P4.7 billion for the public school feeding program. The program targets 12 million children, 93 percent of whom are enrolled in public schools. Many of these children belong to households that subsist below the poverty threshold.

The House-approved feeding program allocation has become a highly contentious issue that caused the Bicameral Conference Committee deadlock over the proposed P1.125-trillion national budget for 2007. While I serve as Chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means, I was, sadly, excluded from the House panel to the Bicameral Committee.

When the budget was still being deliberated upon by the Lower House, I advocated that the allotment for the feeding program **should be spent only on actual feeding activities for school children,** and not disbursed merely on the distribution of rice, as government did in the past.

I pushed hard for the feeding program because I have seen its positive effect on school children in the Third District of Oriental Negros.

The Oriental Negros Feeding Program was launched on the sheer belief that improved nourishment would redound to enhanced scholastic performance. The program was never based on any political biases whatsoever. The goal was simply to care for our children and build up their mental and physical abilities.

It is tragic that many members of Congress seem to have forgotten what our national hero, Jose Rizal, once said, about the youth being "the hope of our fatherland".

Department of Education (Deped) data show that the cohort survival rate of public elementary school students is deteriorating every year, with a dropout rate of about 32 percent, or even worse in some areas in the countryside.

Besides the increasing dropout rate, government has to address the mediocre performance of students, especially in the core disciplines of Science and Mathematics. The average international scores for Science and Mathematics are 481 and 487, respectively, while the Philippines' mean score is only 345 for both subjects. In the National Achievement Test, Grade 6 students got an average rate of 44.84 percent in Math and 43.98 percent in Science, out of a highest possible score of 100 percent. A review of the regional mean percentage scores would indicate that students in the poorest areas performed the worst.

The Philippine Star editorial of July 5, 2006 attests to the deteriorating academic performance of school children. The editorial noted that **Filipino students ranked near the bottom among 25 countries on the elementary level**, and stressed the need to check the decline in the quality of education. Otherwise, it could take a generation before the nation can recover from the consequences of a poorly educated citizenry. It is said that health and education are the surest ways to climb the socio-economic ladder. But we cannot achieve this vision as long as many of our children are languishing in their homes in hunger, instead of eagerly learning in school.

A number of members of Congress may have overlooked the fact that the dismal scholastic performance of school children is rooted in widespread poverty and severe malnutrition.

In farming, fertilization is necessary in order to achieve a bountiful harvest. The same principle may be applied to addressing malnutrition. Government must have a responsive feeding program that will target public school children.

Another problem that parents have to cope with is the soaring cost of education. Owing to the high cost of tuition, parents have to rely on public schooling, rather than enroll their children in private institutions. This is illustrated by the lopsided enrollment rate between private and public schools. In school year 2005-2006, **a total of 11,982,461 students were in enrolled in public schools**, while only 931,383 students enlisted with private institutions. Despite the massive demand for public schooling, Congress has been slow to increase funding support. Thus, the general decline in the quality of basic education.

A United Nations Development Program country assessment of the Philippines bared that government on average spends a measly P1,690 for every elementary student annually. The inadequate support has led to a massive shortage of classrooms, tables and chairs. There is also a dearth of qualified teachers, which has been aggravated by their inequitable deployment at the local level. It is a common sight to have 100 children cramped in a classroom and sharing books among themselves. This runs counter to Deped records supposedly indicating that the teacher-pupil ratio in public elementary schools is 1:35 this school year.

If government cannot adequately provide for the educational needs of the children, what more for their nutritional requirement? More often, children report to school for morning classes with empty stomachs. They are supposed to go home for lunch. But chances are there will be no lunch waiting for them at home. With still-hungry stomachs, many of them are too tired to go back to school. After Grade 3, many will discontinue their schooling, and look for work to support their families struggling to meet daily necessities such as food.

This shortcoming in basic education and the weak predisposition of students to learn, due to their poor health and nutrition, have serious implications as they advance in the educational level. According to experts, there is a significant relationship between a child's readiness to learn and how much that child can learn. No matter how much stimulation a child gets, if the child is not developmentally ready to do so, teaching will be a waste of time and effort.

This educational malaise prompted my office and the office of the Governor of Oriental Negros, with the help of some donors, to initiate a pilot school feeding project, the Free Noon Meal Program, in the Third District. The program seeks to address the malnutrition, poor scholastic performance and low school survival rate of students. The community-based program is partly funded by my Priority Development Assistance Fund, with counterpart financing from local governments and donors. The program provides school children highly nutritious food like rice topped with ginataang mongo, pulverized dried fish (sapsap or dilis) and iodized salt.

Some parents not only bring the vegetables and coconut milk, but also cook the food. Barangay officials provide the kitchen and the utensils. The students themselves bring the firewood and wash the plates, spoons and glasses.

Besides fostering a sense of community, the children are also taught personal hygiene before lunch. They are also taught good graces through prayers before meals in the vernacular for Grades 1 to 3, and in English for Grades 4 to 6. They are also taught to be thankful to their parents, teachers, local and national leaders and most importantly, to the Lord for the food they eat.

The program has been a huge success. Six months after the program's implementation, the Provincial Nutritionist has certified that the daily school attendance has significantly increased from 95% to 100%. Moreover, many of the children have gained weight, apart from becoming more attentive and smarter in classses.

Because of the resounding success of this feeding program in the Third District of Oriental Negros, I was invited to present the project during the 2006 National School Health Nutrition Congress in Baguio City. The League of Corporate Foundations Inc. (LCF), upon hearing this noble project, also requested a presentation be made to its member-foundations.

Elementary students enjoy a meal of rice with mongo beans and malunggay leaves under Rep. Teves' Free Noon Meal Program

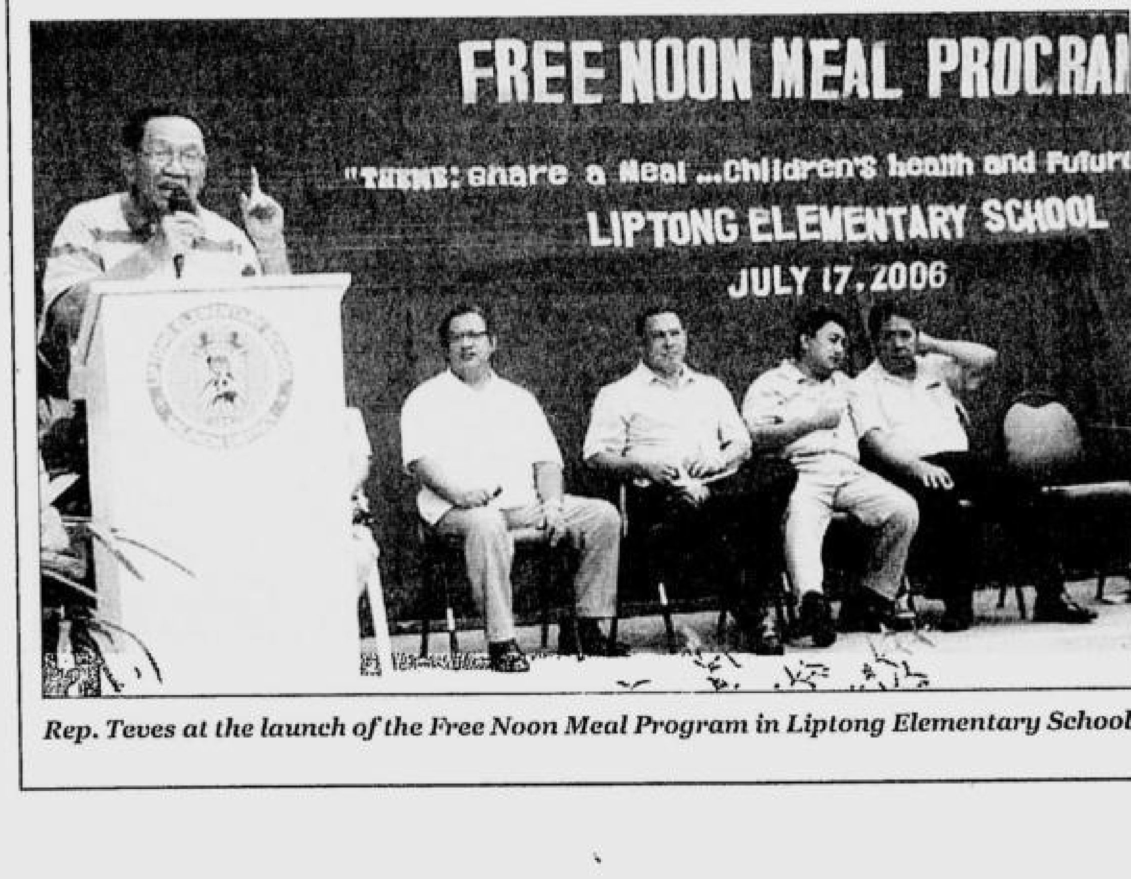
After presenting the Free Noon Meal Program, with a net cost of only P2.65 per meal per student, and the reported improvement of children's health and mental capabilities, I then proposed a national school feeding program with the help of the LCF. Subsequently, a memorandum of agreement was then forged between my office, the LCF (through its Vice President for Programs, Mr. Alex Escaño) and Deped, to expand the program.

Deped erred when it gave Congress a free hand in realigning the P4.7 billion for the school feeding program in favor of more classrooms and more teachers.

The extra P3.0 billion that Deped claims it needs to rebuild typhoon-damaged classrooms is overstated. To begin with, the damage was contained only in some areas. Besides, the proposed 2007 budget already includes a P1.76-billion allocation for the construction and repair of schools outside the Secondary Education Development and Improvement Project (SEDIP). The Third District of Negros Oriental is, in fact, a recipient of both the SEDIP and the Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP). My office allocated substantial equity for these programs, thus making possible the construction of 140 new classrooms and the repair of 601 classrooms under the TEEP, as well as the construction of 50 new classrooms thru SEDIP. Under the Department of Public Works and Highways's regular school building program, another 128 classrooms were built, while 52 Gabaldon school classrooms were repaired and funded by my PDAF.

Deped's request for 6,000 additional teachers is not statistically supported. Based on Deped data for school year 2005-2006, the actual teacher-pupil ratio funded by the national government is 1:33, excluding teacher-aides engaged by local governments.

In deliberating upon the national budget, the primordial concern of Congress should be how to get the maximum benefit from every appropriation. I am totally convinced that solid investments in our school children deserve the highest priority, since they will be running this country once we are long gone. Their physical and mental requirements can best be served with the Free Noon Meal Program. Thus, the budget for this program should be approved with the 2007 budget. Scrapping the program would be tantamount to depriving our children adequate care and nutrition.


FREE NOON MEAL PROGRA
"THEME: share a Meal ...Children's health and Futur
LIPTONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
JULY 17, 2006

Rep. Teves at the launch of the Free Noon Meal Program in Liptong Elementary School

STATISTICAL DATA FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

REGION	Total Teaching & Non-Teaching Personnel	Elementary Enrollment	Teacher/Non-Teacher Ratio
REGION I	22,372	614,686	1:27.47
REGION II	14,980	440,281	1:29.39
REGION III	34,471	1,199,014	1:34.78
REGION IV	47,428	1,805,199	1:38.06
REGION V	27,233	889,351	1:32.65
REGION VI	33,639	999,975	1:29.72
REGION VII	25,433	912,145	1:35.86
REGION VIII	21,982	668,908	1:30.42
REGION IX	16,406	528,686	1:32.22
REGION X	18,124	604,574	1:33.35
CARAGA	11,688	359,216	1:30.73
NCR	29,270	1,148,342	1:39.23
CAR	7,932	214,521	1:27.04
TOTAL	310,958	10,384,898	1:33.39

EDITORIAL

Food for votes good under present economic conditions

PIONEER BI-WEEKLY
the Negros Chronicle
33 YEARS OF COMMUNITY JOURNALISM

The man regarded as the conscience of the Congress is splitting his hair over the decision of the Senate to junk his proposal to provide free noon meals to all public elementary school children nationwide.

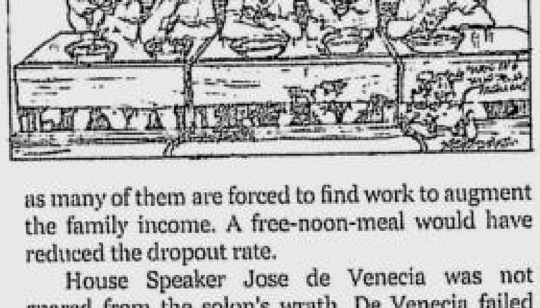
Representative Herminio Teves of the Third District, author of this novel way of providing nutritious lunch to 90 percent of the country's malnourished elementary students, criticized the senators for being apathetic to the children's plight. Most senators are out of touch with reality, for they live in big cities and have not experienced the hardships of studying in public school.

Teves had this well-appreciated and practical way of solving the massive, 70-percent dropout rate among public elementary school students. The novel idea, coming from a self-admitted traditional politician, was to encourage parents to volunteer and cook donated lunch for their children. The lunch is composed of a nutritious menu of vegetable and meat or fish. Parents cooking for their kids can also partake of the free meal.

This way, Teves predicted that the mental abilities of the children will improve over time. As a result, they will have a better chance of passing the Department of Education's evaluation tests, apart of course from getting an empty stomach filled. But the Senate junked the House-approved pet project of Sir Miniong Teves. The senators are unaware that only seven percent of the children are enrolled in private schools. The rest are herded in public schools.

The proposal would have set aside P4.2 billion for the free-noon-meal program, but the Senate opted to realign the budget for the construction of more school buildings and the hiring of additional teachers. But more schoolhouses filled with children with empty stomachs will not mean much.

Teves also said that extreme poverty prevents 63 percent of the children from reaching Grade 6, as many of them are forced to find work to augment the family income. A free-noon-meal would have reduced the dropout rate.


PAUL-UOTO BAYLO SA VOTO NYO?
BITAW!
MAAYO HA LANG NI KAY SA GUTOM!

House Speaker Jose de Venecia was not spared from the solon's wrath. De Venecia failed to nominate Teves as a member of the House contingent to the bicameral committee, which could have provided him the avenue to defend his proposal. After all, Teves is chair of the House committee on ways and means. The legislature would have remembered that the way to the heart is through the stomach. Other local officials like Governor George Arnaiz and Bais City Mayor Tata Villanueva shared the sentiment of Teves, and joined him in appealing to the Senate to reconsider its decision.

Regardless of the outcome, there is no stopping Teves, who intends to pursue his free noon meal for poor children, with volunteer-parents cooking in school. Teves has vowed to use his P70-million annual pork barrel or Priority Development Assistance Fund, hoping that many will follow suit.

Arnaiz attests that after months of implementing the program, there has been a marked increase in student enrollment and attendance. The program has also curbed child malnutrition in the covered towns.

Most importantly, the mental abilities of the children will be healthier in the years ahead.

ADVT

Weary Realtors crush Barako

Pingris lifts Giants past Pals

GAMES WEDNESDAY (*Cuneta Astrodome*)
4:35 p.m.—Purefoods vs Talk 'N Text
7:20 p.m.—Sta. Lucia vs Red Bull

By Musong R. Castillo

STA. LUCIA IS TIRED—OF LOSING.

The Realtors jumped the gun on Red Bull last night and then hit timely baskets in the stretch for a 96-89 victory at the Araneta Coliseum and a 1-0 lead in their Talk 'N Text Philippine Cup quarterfinal series.

Sta. Lucia built a commanding lead early, not showing signs of fatigue despite coming off four games in an eight-day stretch, to completely take the Barako by surprise and gain a headstart in their interesting pairing.

"It was all over the papers [today], that we are injured and [that we are] a tired team," Sta. Lucia coach Alfrancis Chua said. "Yes, we're tired. We're tired of losing."

With an inspired Marc Pingris leading the way, Purefoods cut hulking Talk 'N Text down to size later to post an 87-84 win over the Phone Pals for a similar headstart in their separate series.

Pingris, the hard-working forward who on Friday got to talk to his father for the first time in 25 years, scattered 19 points, hauled down 17 rebounds and swatted away five enemy shots to prove to be the difference.

"I think no one expected us to win but ourselves," Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio said. "The odds are stacked against us. There's nothing big with this win, it's just 1-0, and you need to win three games to win this series."

Paolo Mendoza hit two triples and Marlou Aquino eight of his 10 points in the first quarter to jump-start the Sta. Lucia offensive as the Realtors erected double-digit leads right in the first four minutes and were never headed.

The Realtors dropped 37 points in the first period and were 28 points up at the half, 65-37, a huge enough buffer that cushioned a mighty Red Bull comeback anchored on small forwards Cyrus Baguio and Junthy Valenzuela.

"Of course, they will come back," Chua said of Red Bull. "We still have games to play. The only time Red Bull doesn't make a comeback is when this series is over. Otherwise, that team will keep on trying."

Despite the setback, and despite how bad his team played in the first half, Red Bull coach Yeng Guiao still looked and sounded optimistic.

"Obviously, there was some rust there," Guiao said in explaining his team's poor first half. "At least now, we're over that. Our confidence is still high. I guess we have to pay the price for coming off such a long rest."

The scores:

First Game

STA. LUCIA 96—Mendoza 19, Williams 17, Cabagnot 16, Espino 14, Aquino 10, Calimag 8, Gonzales 8, Omolon 3, Bughao 1.

RED BULL 89—Valenzuela 19, Baguio 15, Sharma 13, Pennisi 11, Fonacier 7, Villanueva 5, Najorda 4, Bugia 4, Alvarez 4, Robinson 4, Cruz 3, Membrere 0.

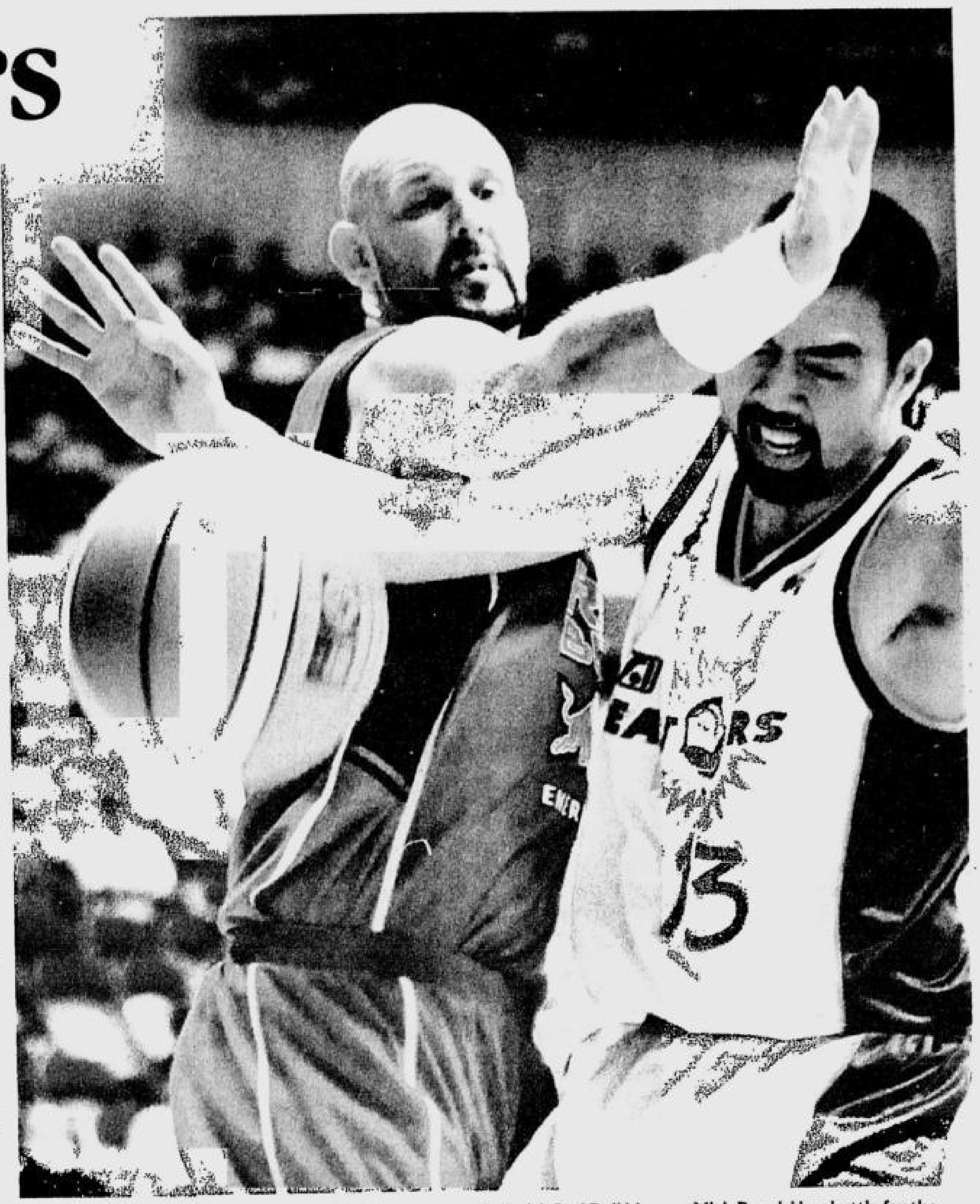
Quarters: 37-22, 65-37, 81-66, 96-89

Second Game

PUREFOODS 87—Pingris 19, Yap J. 18, Raymundo 13, Yap R. 8, Evangelista 6, Yee 6, Artadi 5, Castillo 5, Limpot 4, Simon 3, Salvador 0.

TALK 'N TEXT 84—Taulava 16, Noble 13, Ritualo 10, Cardona 8, Carey 8, De Ocampo 8, Washington 7, Alapag 7, Pablo 7, Belano 0.

Quarters: 20-24, 45-37, 72-60, 87-84


STA. LUCIA beanpole Marlou Aquino (right) gets entangled with Red Bull big man Mick Pennisi in a battle for the loose ball in last night's quarterfinal game between the Realtors and the Barako. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

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P1,999	Cebu - Hong Kong Manila - Hong Kong
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It's time everyone flies.

Canadian sitcom shows funny side of Muslims

From page A1

able reviews and spectacular ratings.

The television show parodies the acclaimed US drama "Little House on the Prairie" (1974-83), which starred Michael Landon and Melissa Gilbert, about the life and adventures of the Ingalls family in the 19th-century American West.

But instead of raising pitchforks, tumbling down hills and selling eggs at the general store, this Muslim family struggles to mesh in a fictional town in Saskatchewan, in a post-Sept. 11, 2001, world.

The show mocks Muslim townsfolks' efforts to establish a mosque in a mostly Protestant whistle stop, and pokes fun at their relations with suspicious neighbors.

"It's a sitcom and not a political satire," said Zarqa Nawaz, the *hijab* (veil)-wearing creator of the show. But the Liverpool-born filmmaker, practicing Muslim and mother of four also hopes the show will help dispel stereotypes and prejudices about her religion that festered after the Sept. 11, 2001, al-Qaida attacks on the United States.

"Since 9/11, what we see on the news nearly every day portrays Muslims in terms of conflict. It tends to create a one-dimensional perception of a very diverse community," she said.

The series tackles these issues head-on.

Enemy in the kitchen

An overzealous imam, for instance, sees dangers to Muslims lurking everywhere. "The enemy is in your kitchen," he tells his bemused congregation. "Wine gums, rye bread, licorice—Western traps designed to seduce Muslims to drink alcohol."

A young lawyer, who gives up a promising career in Toronto to become the new imam (priest) in Mercy, is pulled aside at the airport after he is overheard talking on a cell phone about career suicide and the new job that is "Allah's plan for me."

"You're not going to paradise today," says a security guard, dragging the man out of the line.

Terrorists don't dance

"Laughter is a universal language," said Nawaz, whose previous films include "BBQ Muslims" and "Real Terrorists Don't Belly Dance."

"It's important to get over this assumption that Muslims are not funny or they can't take a joke or that we don't have the same sort of relationships that anyone else would have," she said.

"Little Mosque" is based on her own experiences as a Muslim growing up in Toronto and now living in Regina, the capital of Saskatchewan province.

The series aired by Canadian Broadcasting Corp. (CBC) generated a lot of attention even before its first episode. The buzz was likely due more to the idea of controversy rather than any real daring in the program.

Think outside mosque

Rumors that CBC hired a consultant to ensure Muslim sensibilities were not offended—untrue, according to Nawaz—only fanned the speculation.

"Muslims were really worried because issues in the media surrounding Muslims tend to be so skewed toward violence," said Nawaz, whose production company, FUNdamentalist Films, promises to put the "fun back into fundamentalism."

The program has met with a guarded response from some in the Muslim community, who are grateful to see a more typical image of Muslims on television, but also wary about the creation of other misconceptions.

"It's a beginning, we've never had any comedy shows per se about the Muslim community," said Wahida Valiente, national vice president of the Canadian Islamic Congress. "Maybe they need to shift their focus just from the mosque. Muslims aren't really that much involved every day of their life in the mosque."

Best show in years

The Globe and Mail newspaper praised the show's pilot episode as the best that CBC has produced in years.

The paper called it "a grand-slam assertion that Canadian television is different and that the best of Canadian television amounts to a rejection of the hegemony of US network television."

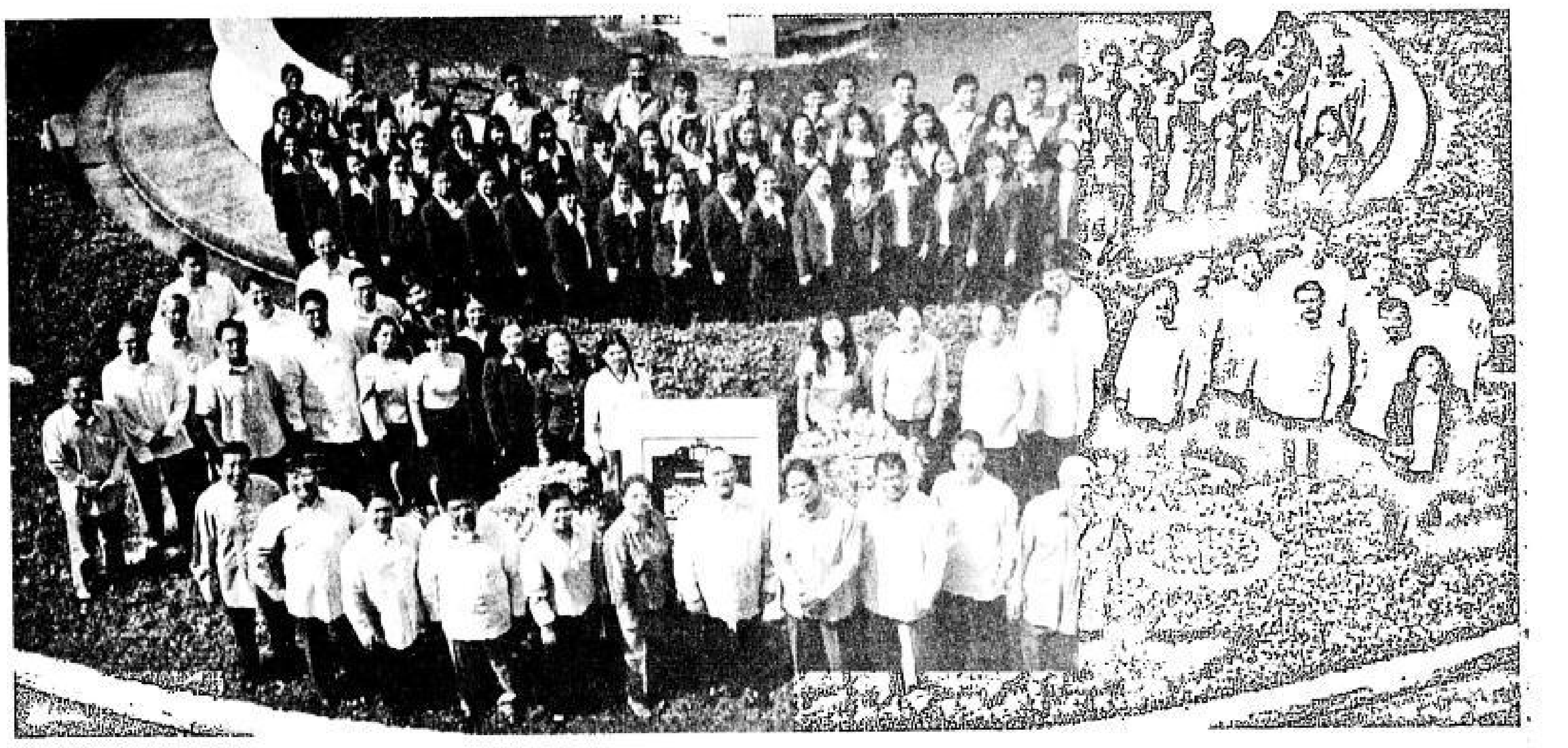
Despite the material, "Little Mosque" is a quintessentially Canadian show—gentle humor, quirky small-town characters, Toronto-bashing, new immigrants—which could make it difficult for the producers to sell it abroad.

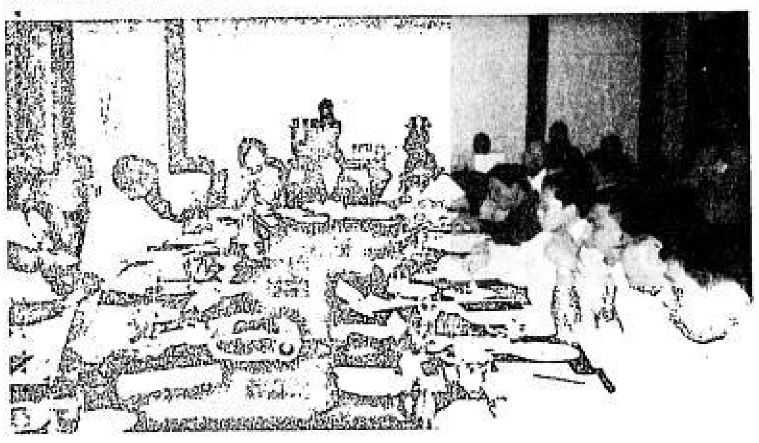
The creators say they have received calls from broadcasters in the United States, Europe and the Middle East who expressed interested in airing the show and, in some cases, buying the format rights.

The program drew 2.1 million viewers in its debut, surpassing average CBC show viewership of 500,000 to 1 million, according to Kirstine Layfield, CBC's executive director of network programming. *Reports from Reuters and AFP*

OGCC reports fundamental improvements for stronger legal service in 2006

The Office of the Government Corporate Counsel (OGCC) accelerated its growth last year in line with the President's goal to establish a strong republic. By increasing the standards of legal service with an advocacy for good corporate governance and corporate social responsibility, OGCC led the way for its client corporations - the Government Owned and Controlled Corporations (GOCCs) - to operate with more efficiency, attain a balanced budget, and contribute to the over-all improvement in the rendition of public service by the National Government. This was made possible through the able leadership of Government Corporate Counsel (GCC) Agnes VST Devanadera, under whose stewardship OGCC was transformed into the legal institution for progress and development, thereby gaining another significant milestone for GOCCs.



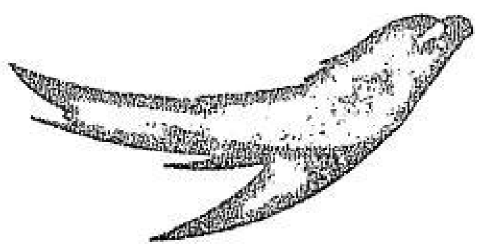


OGCC improved its administrative support system by giving the staff adequate training on information technology and increasing the ratio of the number of computers to lawyers and staff

Since OGCC is more than 70 years old in existence, GCC Devanadera continued the legacy of her predecessors in building blocks for the institution. What she did is to bring in the dimension of a responsive legal service in light of the dynamism of the corporate world that cannot be parochially viewed within the geographical and political boundaries of a nation. She anchored all changes in the institution on legal fundamentals and thereby, strengthened the institution as well as the people in it.

The transformation begun when OGCC started laying cornerstones for achieving legal excellence by carrying out capability-building programs and activities, like seminars that enhance their legal skills in alternative dispute resolution, new requirements under the procurement law, jurisprudential developments involving real property taxation, and recent Supreme Court decisions and case law on contemporary issues and analysis of current developments in corporations, privatizations thereof and investments therein. The capability-building trainings and seminars were also attended by in-house counsels of GOCCs.

At the same time, OGCC improved its administrative support system by giving the staff adequate training on information technology and increasing the ratio of the number of computers to lawyers and staff. These were undertaken to prepare the men and women of OGCC with the opening of its own website at www.ogcc.gov.ph.



Alongside the capability building efforts was the consistent implementation of the Zero Backlog Policy that requires the legal and the administrative staff to finish their workload on time. In its report to the House of Representatives, the OGCC indicated that it disposed of all pending requests for opinion and contract review thereby attaining a zero backlog and an increased efficiency rate of 174 percent in terms of completing the rendition of legal services to GOCCs despite lack of resources, particularly, manpower. OGCC's vigor in carrying out its duty was further bolstered when the Supreme Court on August 1, 2005 in the case of Land Bank of the Philippines vs. Teresita Panlilio-Luciano, affirmed OGCC's statutory role as the principal legal counsel of GOCCs. The high court explained that the legal department of a GOCC such as the LBP cannot prosecute cases alone. The court said "If the LBP Legal Department has long operated as an independent fiefdom absent any control, supervision, or even concern from the OGCC, then this practice must end now."

In less than three (3) years at the helm, GCC Devanadera has successfully prosecuted several important cases for its client corporations, the most notable of which is the case between Manila International Airport Authority [MIAA] and the City of Parañaque, where the Supreme Court upheld the exemption of government instrumentalities from real estate taxes and other fees and charges imposed by LGUs.

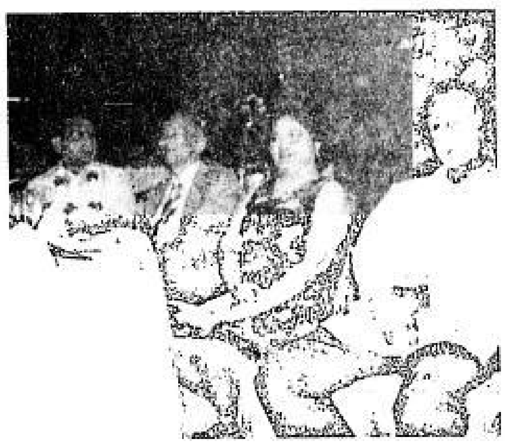
Metropolitan Waterworks & Sewerage System
AWARDING CEREMONY
DMCI-MPIC Water Company, Inc.

"MIAA is a government instrumentality vested with corporate powers and performing, essential public services pursuant to Section 2(10) of the Introductory Provisions of the Administrative Code. As a government instrumentality, MIAA is not subject to any kind of tax by local governments under Section 133 (o) of the Local Government Code".

With the victory in the MIAA case, the GOCCs will be able to channel billions of their funds to the core economic activities as mandated by their charters and thereby generate more job opportunities for local communities and funds for the national government.

In his Column in the Manila Bulletin, Michael P. Elbinias opined that the "OGCC's positions" in the case are "wise". He says "Government's social services and functions provided by such instrumentalities would not be reduced, diminished, or hampered by their having to pay taxes to local government units. Furthermore, government would have the advantage of being able to use funds by whole chunks, as compared to smaller and marginal tax payments that each local government unit would merely obtain. As a result, the public has benefited more from the OGCC's positions."

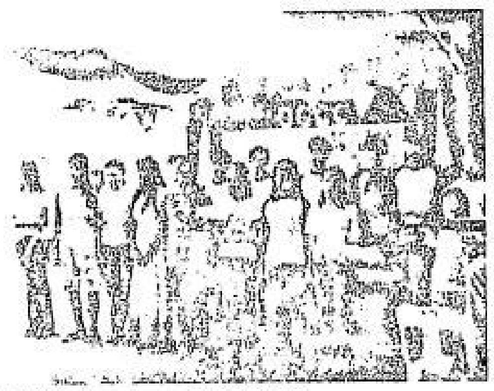
Aside from ensuring that cases of GOCCs are efficiently and successfully prosecuted and/or defended, OGCC has also been at the forefront of efforts to safeguard all transactions that GOCCs are involved in, particularly ensuring transparency, integrity, and order in the bidding process. Proof of this commitment and action is the outcome of the selection process in the Assignment of MWSS' receivables and of its right and obligation to subscribe to 83.97 percent equity in Maynilad Services, Inc. From day one of the process until its successful conclusion, GCC Devanadera steadfastly stood by her commitment to make the process work for the benefit of the water consumers in the West Concession because right at the onset, she had adopted the conviction that "FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION" in the bidding process.

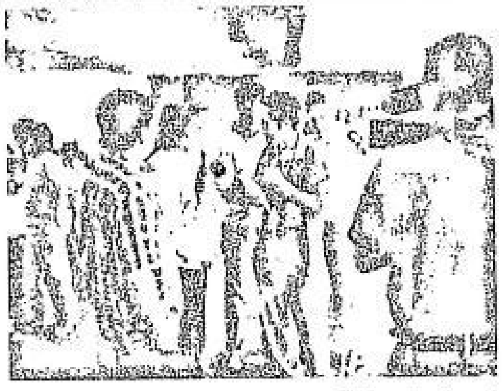


Significantly, pivotal to the success of the selection process were the creative legal moves undertaken in corporate rehabilitation particularly on the legal battle submitted to the Rehabilitation Court presided by Reynaldo B. Daway, Branch 90 of the Regional Trial Court of Quezon City. Upholding the position of the OGCC, Judge Daway issued an Omnibus Order on January 5, 2007 that "the super minority rights of the Suez Group, as currently embodied in the by-laws of Maynilad Water Services, Inc., be declared no longer applicable because of changed circumstances upon completion of the capital restructuring and that such by-laws must be amended to conform to standard provisions required by the Securities and Exchange Commission for by-laws of Philippine corporations unless a new shareholders' agreement is executed." This favorable decision of the rehabilitation court on the legal propositions of OGCC, as the statutory legal counsel of MWSS, ensures the completion of the selection process.

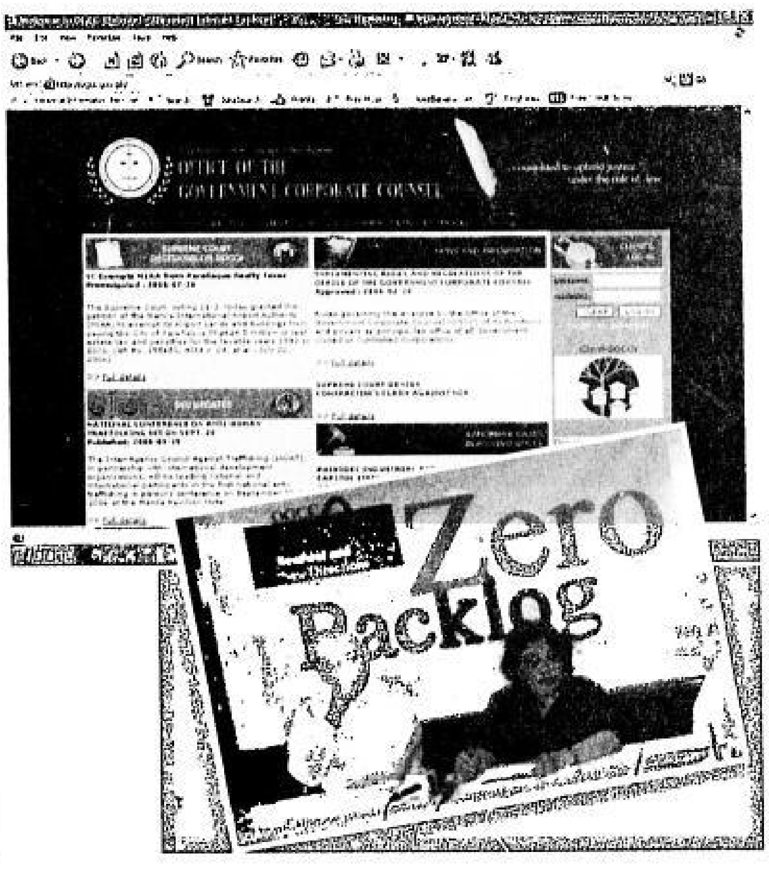
But the more far-reaching legacy of GCC Devanadera is the issuance of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the OGCC.

GCC Devanadera says The "IRR of OGCC integrates and implements OGCC's mandate of helping client GOCCs function productively, efficiently, and responsibly. It shall serve as the guiding principle in resolving legal conflicts and in responding to the problems, issues and needs of client GOCCs." Consistent with the principle of keeping up with the dynamism of the corporate world, the new trends in the settlement of disputes, and in line with the innovation set by the Supreme Court, the OGCC IRR included an entire section on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). She adds "ADR has already been put to test in actual cases pending before the OGCC and some of these cases are about to be resolved." It was attended by no less than Executive Secretary Eduardo R. Ermita, as Guest Speaker, and Justice Secretary Raul M. Gonzales, who both conveyed their pride and support for having witnessed the transformations undertaken within OGCC.





However, OGCC is not confining its legal service to its client corporations. It promises to tackle a social advocacy particularly based on disadvantaged and abused children. It has embarked on a campaign for the protection of children, as part of leading the advocacy for corporate social responsibility. OGCC's OPLAN: KKK (Kalinga at Katarungan para sa mga Kabataan) will add a new challenge and awakening to this institution that seeks to keep its commitment to uphold justice and the rule of law. The program also aims to instill in the lawyers the sensitivity for the underprivileged for whom this noble profession of law must likewise protect.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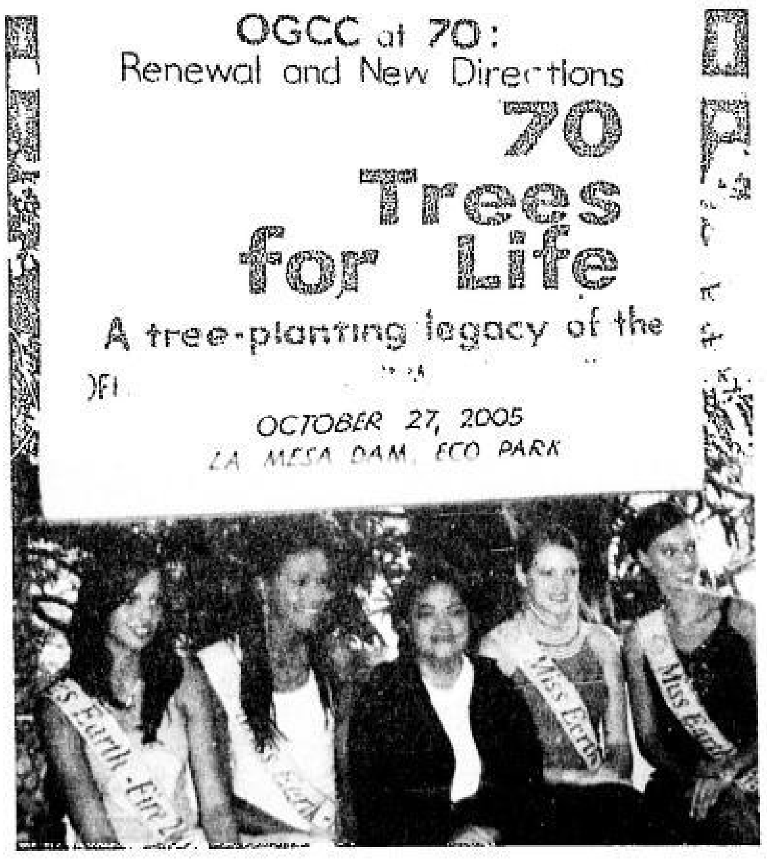

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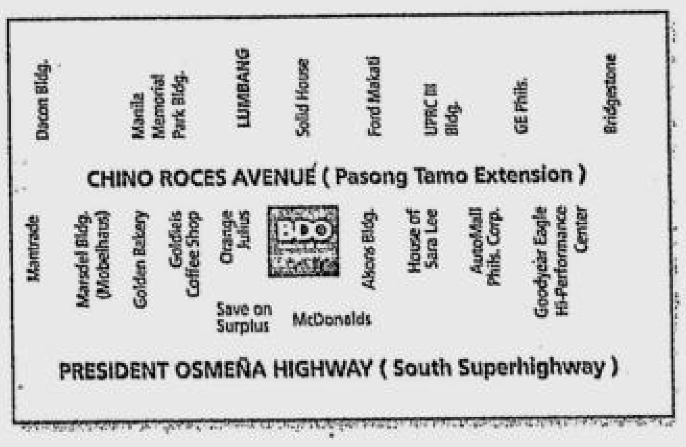
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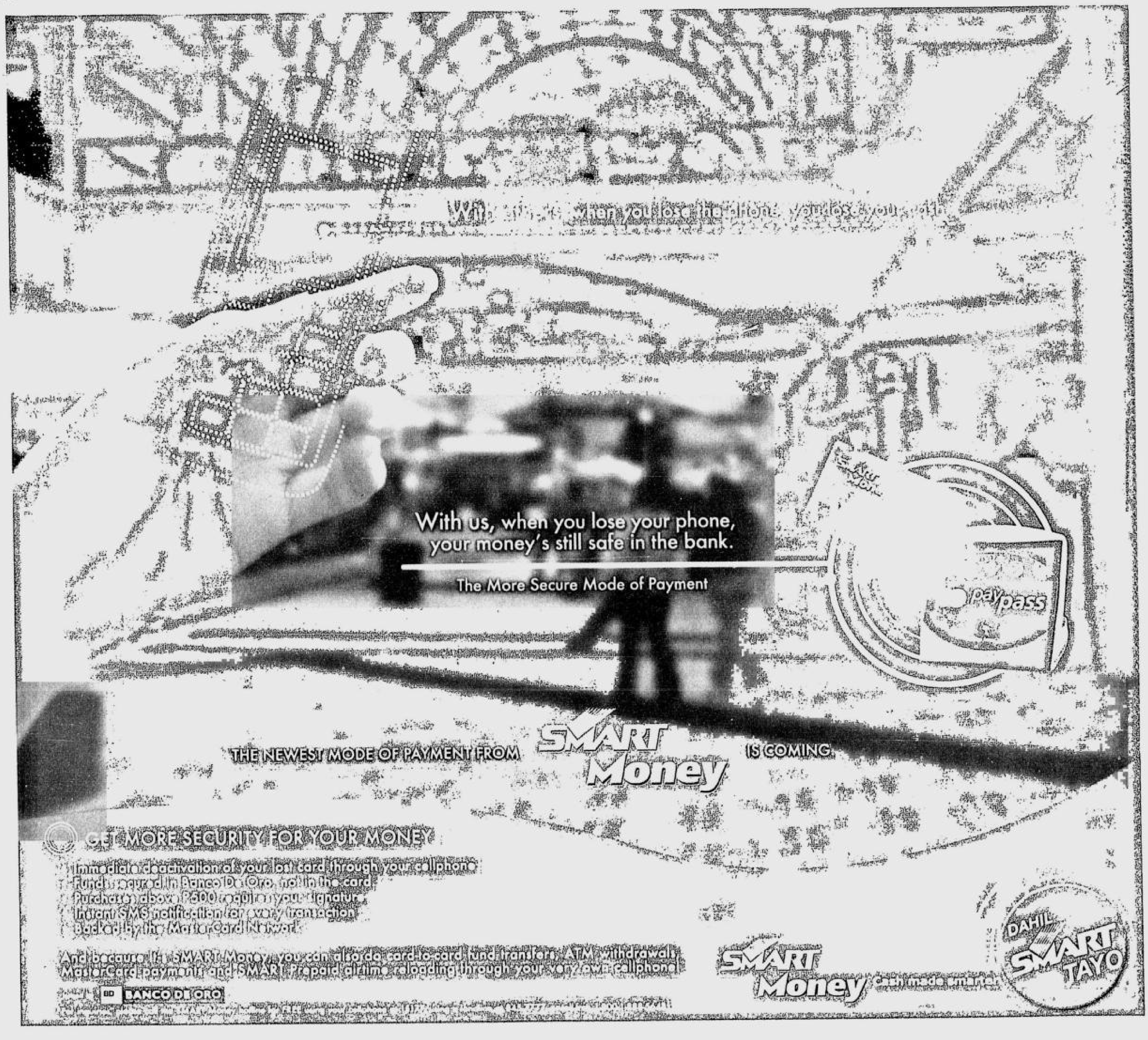

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Leviste aide was shot several times

Officials correct earlier report that victim was shot only once

By Tarra Quismundo

MAKATI POLICE OFFICIALS yesterday confirmed that Rafael de las Alas, the aide of former Batangas Gov. Tony Leviste, was shot not only once, but several times.

Leviste, who is confined at the Makati Medical Center for a heart condition, had admitted that he shot De las Alas on Friday in self-defense.

Supt. Gilbert Cruz, Makati police chief; Chief Insp. Manny Santos, head of the Intelligence and Investigation section and Criminal Investigation Section chief, Senior Insp. Eduardo Paningbatan, told the INQUIRER that contrary to earlier reports, De las Alas sustained multiple gunshot wounds in the face and head.

But they have yet to ascertain whether the victim had been shot three or four times as the autopsy report has yet to be released.

The body of De las Alas, who worked for Leviste for 42 years, was found inside Leviste's office on the ninth floor of the LPL Towers on Legaspi Street, Makati City on Friday. Leviste later surrendered to Mayor Jejomar Binay at the Makati Medical Center where he was admitted for high blood pressure.

The former governor and estranged husband of Sen. Loren Legarda has since been under round-the-clock police watch.

Police all set

Although Leviste has yet to issue a statement on the incident, Cruz said that they were pushing through with the filing of charges against him this morning at the Makati City Prosecutor's Office.

According to Cruz, there was a possibility that the charges against the former official could be elevated to murder, instead of homicide.

"We are still deliberating what charges will be filed pending results of the investigation. But it can be elevated to murder depending on the account of witnesses and Soco (Scene of the Crime Operatives) investigation," he told the INQUIRER.

As defined in the Revised Penal Code, murder is a crime committed "with treachery," "with evident premeditation," "with cruelty" and by "employing means to weaken the defense ... of persons to insure or afford impunity." Depending on the circumstances, it is punishable by a 20-year prison term or death.

Homicide, on the other hand, is committed without prior intent and could be a consequence of a scuffle or an accident. It is punishable by a prison term of 12 to 20 years.

"It can be elevated because of the number of gunshot wounds the victim sustained and because nobody could corroborate his claim that it was self-defense. In any case, he is considered a suspect in a killing and his status for the police is that he is under arrest," Cruz said.

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Magdalo lawyer to run for Congress

By DJ Yap

BELMONTE RAFFY LERMA

ON THE LAST TWO occasions that lawyer Jose Christopher "Kit" Belmonte made the headlines, he had just been arrested with junior Army officers on the run from the government.

Now, he wants to dip his toes into politics—as representative of Quezon City—in a move that could put his uncle, Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr., on the spot.

"I know this is going to put my uncle in an awkward position, but I'm seriously considering a run for congressman of District II," Kit told the INQUIRER in an interview.

The younger Belmonte is facing a rebellion case on top of charges for illegal possession of firearms and explosives pending before courts in Makati and Quezon cities.

In two separate incidents last year, he was caught in the company of escaped junior officers belonging to the "Magdalo Group" which had staged the failed 2003 Oakwood mutiny in Makati City.

Kit said he was one of the group's many lawyers. "I became really, really close to them to the point that we were like brothers," he told the INQUIRER.

He said there was a chance that the mayor, who is allied with the administration party, would opt to support incumbent Rep. Mary Ann Susano, who will seek a second term.

"I may have to run as an independent ... My uncle also has to keep his word to the incumbent," Kit said in a mix of English and Filipino. He added, "I'm used to fighting losing battles, anyway."

The younger Belmonte said any candidate's chances of winning District II rest on whoever gets the blessings of his uncle. "From my consultations with local officials ... they all love him. So whoever gets his backing is almost the sure winner," he added.

Kit admitted that his previous "brushes" with the law may also somehow help his campaign. "For one, I already have name recall. For another, many people sympathize with my cause. Then again, many would also be afraid," he added.

NBI installs more payment kiosks

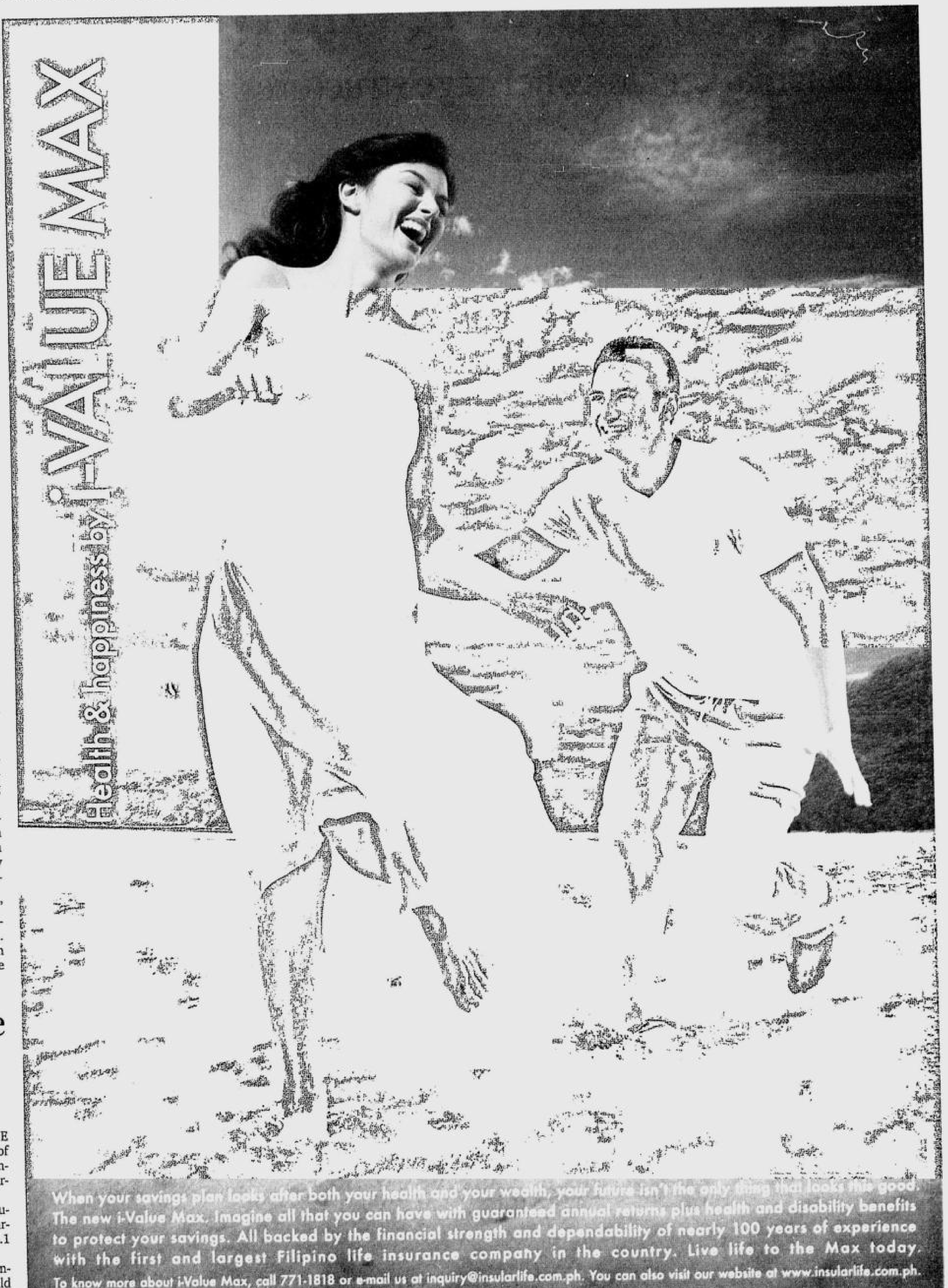
By Margaux C. Ortiz

DUE TO A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN THE number of applicants, the National Bureau of Investigation will be putting up more unmanned clearance payment kiosks at its clearance center in Sta. Cruz, Manila.

NBI Director Nestor Mantaring said the bureau processed and issued 4.4 million clearance certificates last year compared to 4.1 million in 2005.

Mantaring explained that with the unmanned clearance kiosks, applicants could immediately pay the clearance fee without going through the hassle of waiting in long lines.

The unmanned kiosks work like automated teller machines. Applicants can pay the clearance fee by inserting the exact amount—P115—into specialized slots.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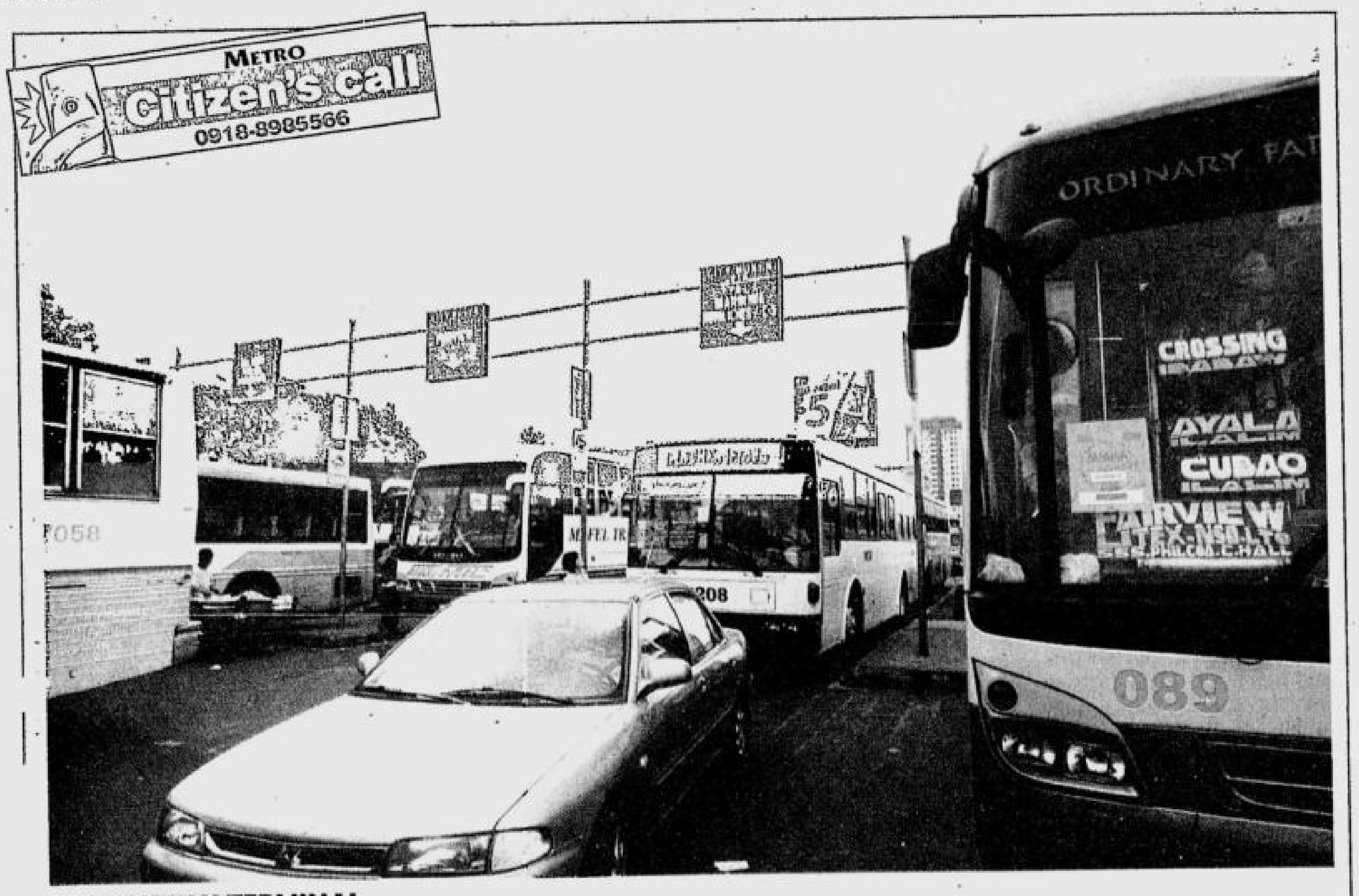


INSTANT BUS TERMINAL
INQUIRER reader Jeff, a 27-year-old resident of Pasay City, sent a text message to Citizen's Call about his observation on the traffic situation in the Roxas Boulevard area. His message went: "Attention Metropolitan Manila Development Authority and Pasay City traffic enforcers: *Ginagawang bus terminal ang Roxas Boulevard malapit sa Baclaran church. Grabe ang traffic sa lugar na 'yan!"*

METRO Citizen's call 0918-8985566

I THOUGHT we have a ban on billboards. Is the vicinity of SM North Edsa exempted?

—**EDDIE TIU, Manila**

Pasay police love to watch the clashes between vendors and the MMDA and then goes to the scene when the fight is over.

—**JAMES, 27, Pasay City**

Gusto ko lang po humingi ng tulong baka pwede magawan ng paraan ang baha dito sa lugar po namin sa Altura Extension, Sta. Mesa, Manila. Konting ulan, baha na po agad. Maraming estudyante ang nagdadaan po dito. Matagal na po ang problema na ito at problema pa rin until now. Sana matulungan niyo kami.

—**ELEANOR P. ASPREC, 51, Altura Extension, Sta. Mesa, Manila**

Motorists from Marcelo Green Village, West Service Road along South Luzon Expressway have to endure every day a traffic jam that is about two kilometers long due to inept PNCC traffic enforcers at the Bicutan intersection.

—**JOEY REYES, 50, Makati**

Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte's streamers at the corner of Congressional & Mindanao Avenues are blocking the traffic lights.

—**MANNY MONSALUD, 37, Quezon City**

DID YOU KNOW

ON JAN. 15, 1995, Pope John Paul II spoke before four to five million Filipinos who attended the World Youth Day celebration at Rizal Park. It was said to be the largest crowd of his pontificate. World Youth Day is an annual event participated in by people aged 16 to 35 from over 150 countries.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research

Art Deco buildings thrive on FEU campus

Special marker citing heritage structures' architect installed on Jan. 25

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE STRUCTURES SERVE AS A reminder of a prosperous time in the 1920s, when technology was king and the future was boundless.

Weathering time and the devastation wrought by World War II, a cluster of five buildings—borne out of a renowned architect's extraordinary creative talent and a pioneering private educator's vision—has been recognized for preserving a special architecture and style.

The buildings, bearing the distinctive Art Deco architecture of the 1920s, still stand proudly on the Far Eastern University (FEU) campus in Manila.

The university was given a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) Asia Pacific Heritage Award for Cultural Heritage in 2005 for the outstanding preservation of its Art Deco structures.

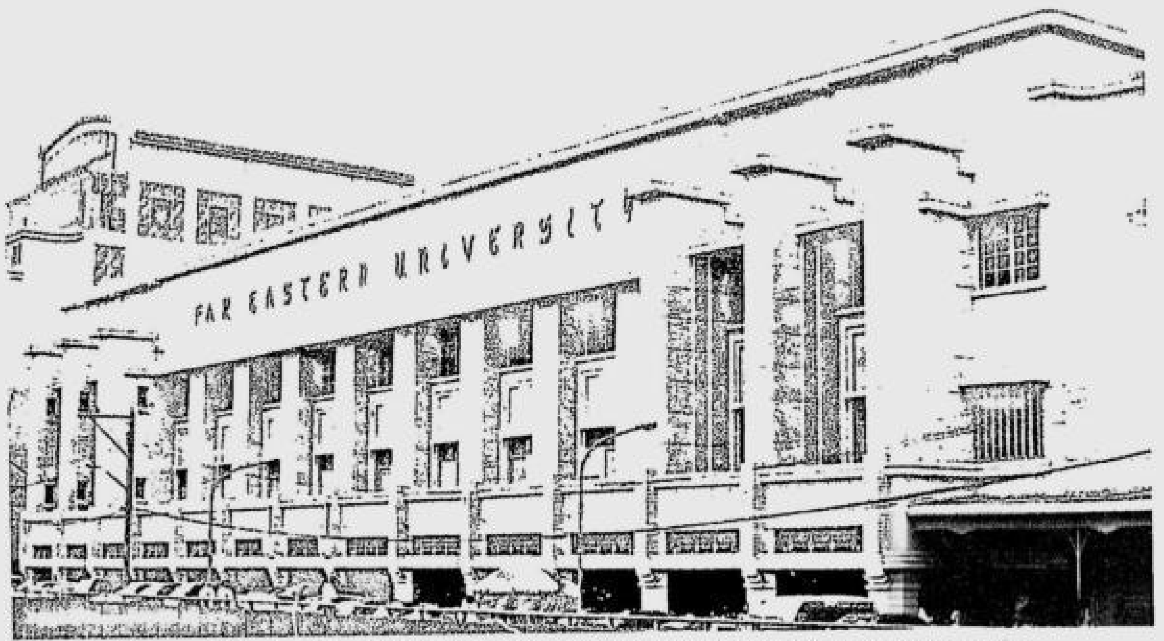
"The Unesco award was created to recognize private institutions that managed to preserve heritage buildings which are more than 50 years old," FEU Center for Studies on the Urban Environment (SURE) executive director Joel Oaña told the INQUIRER in an interview.

Designed by National Artist for Architecture Pablo Antonio, the five structures are the Nicanor Reyes Hall, FEU East Asia College of Engineering and Computer Studies, the Law and Nursing Building, Auditorium/Administration Building and the Science Building.

After studying architecture in London, Antonio was one of those who introduced the Art Deco style in the Philippines, according to Oaña.

"The Art Deco movement started in Paris in the the early 1920s," explained the FEU official who is also an architectural designer and researcher.

He said the new style was the movement's answer to the neoclassical architecture predominant during the time.



NICANOR Reyes Hall, the "flagship" building of the FEU Manila Campus, was named after the university's founder.

PHOTOS BY RUDY ESPERAS

"The old style was patterned after Greek and Roman temples characterized by huge pillars and ornate designs," Oaña said, citing the Post Office building and the National Museum in Manila as examples of neo-classical structures.

The Art Deco style, in contrast, was characterized by rounded corners, clean and basic geometric forms, grooves and elements from Egyptian art.

"It essentially depicted the advent of progressive modernization and technology: Borrowing and adapting the streamline forms of cars and other technological products that were gaining popularity during that time," Oaña said.

The new style also reflected the designs of big ships—including railings and portholes details. The "steamship" style is evident in the Nicanor Reyes Hall, FEU's flagship building, according to Oaña.

"Art Deco, which was how people envisioned the future, flourished just before the Great Depression," the FEU official added.

Upon completing one of his major early works, the Ideal Theater on Rizal Avenue in Manila, Antonio was commissioned by FEU founder Nicanor Reyes to construct a school building that would eventually house the university's library and Institute of Accounting, Business and Finance.

Reyes, who obtained his doctor's degree in accounting at Columbia University in New York, had just returned to the country to establish a school for Filipino accountants.

"He wanted to empower Filipinos to become professionals because most of the accountants during that time were foreigners," Oaña said.

The Nicanor Reyes Hall, constructed in 1939, thus symbolized the newfound progressive ideas of Filipino educators during the American era.

Antonio later designed four more buildings: the Girls' High School Building in 1940, Boys High School Building in 1941, the Auditorium and Administration Building in 1949, and the Science Building in 1950.

The Girls' High School, a tropical adaptation of the Western Art Deco style with its thin concrete slabs running parallel to the window tops, was later transformed into the FEU East Asia College.

The Boys' High School, a mirror image of the girls' building, eventually became the Law and Nursing Building.

The Science Building, on the other hand, exemplified the transition from the Art Deco style to the post-World War II International Style. While Art Deco's architectural geometry was still evident, the building design was simplified to suggest the sleek, taut surfaces of the new style, according to Oaña.

Other structures on the FEU campus bearing the "International Style" of the 1950s include the FEU Chapel, the FEU Hospital, and the Arts and Sciences Building.

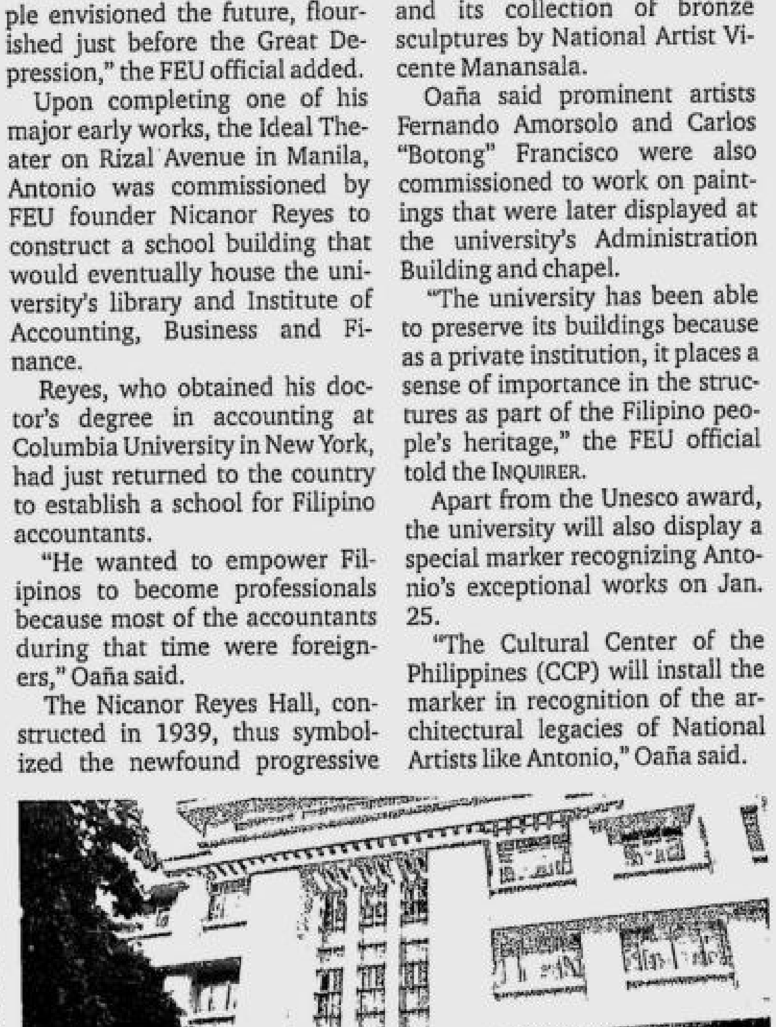
Apart from its prized buildings, the university also takes pride in its landscape architecture, which focuses on the Nicanor Reyes Memorial Square and its collection of bronze sculptures by National Artist Vicente Manansala.

Oaña said prominent artists Fernando Amorsolo and Carlos "Botong" Francisco were also commissioned to work on paintings that were later displayed at the university's Administration Building and chapel.

"The university has been able to preserve its buildings because as a private institution, it places a sense of importance in the structures as part of the Filipino people's heritage," the FEU official told the INQUIRER.

Apart from the Unesco award, the university will also display a special marker recognizing Antonio's exceptional works on Jan. 25.

"The Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) will install the marker in recognition of the architectural legacies of National Artists like Antonio," Oaña said.



THE FACADE of the FEU East Asia College showcases the typical Art Deco style of geometric forms and rounded corners.

10-year-old girl killed in mishap

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

A 10-YEAR-OLD GIRL WAS KILLED WHILE three other persons were hurt when the driver of a passenger jeepney lost control of his vehicle as it was going down the Barangka Flyover in Marikina City shortly before noon yesterday.

The flyover is not too steep but six days ago, another accident occurred in the area, this time involving a delivery truck whose driver said he also lost control of his vehicle as it was cruising down the flyover.

The passenger jeep had just come from San Juan and Cubao, Quezon City and was on its way to SSS Village in Marikina.

But while traveling on the flyover toward Bonifacio Avenue, driver Francisco Lichadores, 35, lost control of the jeep, which was loaded with several passengers, city traffic head Insp. Felipe Evangelista told the INQUIRER.

Lichadores said he stepped on the brakes, but his jeepney did not slow down. It first hit the passenger jeepney it was tailing before slamming into another jeepney, causing minor injuries to 49-year-old Ofelia Dizon, one of the passengers on the second vehicle.

Lichadores' jeepney, however, continued to run. It went up on the sidewalk where several people were walking.

The jeepney ran over 10-year-old Maria Fe Princess Micosa, killing her instantly. She was just walking near her house, Evangelista said.

Ricky Marticio and his cousin, Ariel Azul, both 21, were also hit and sustained minor injuries. They were brought to the Amang Rodriguez Medical Center for treatment while Lichadores voluntarily surrendered after the accident, Evangelista added.

Six days ago, a truck full of oxygen tanks also going down the flyover rammed into a store on Bonifacio Avenue.

Driver Roland Vea, 33, and his helper Jesus dela Cruz, 34, sustained minor bruises. Vea said his brakes malfunctioned so he decided to steer the vehicle away from pedestrians and passenger jeeps to avoid hurting others.

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Thousands ignored tsunami warnings

TOKYO—THOUSANDS OF JAPANESE IGNORED evacuation orders an earthquake triggered tsunami warnings, raising concerns among officials about future disaster management, major newspapers reported Sunday.

A magnitude 8.2 earthquake struck off northern Japan on Saturday, prompting tsunami warnings and sending thousands fleeing to higher ground but causing no reported injuries or damage. Thousands of others ignored the warnings.

Japan's Meteorological Agency lifted all tsunami warnings by late Saturday, and local authorities lifted all evacuation orders for thousands of coastal residents.

Japan's main northern island of Hokkaido had earlier issued evacuation orders for 85,000 coastal residents in 22 towns due to fears of killer waves, said prefectural (state) official Koji Urano.

But only a fraction of them turned up at designated shelters, major newspapers including the Yomiuri and the Mainichi said Sunday.

In Abashiri City, less than 10 percent of the 9,400 residents used designated shelters, the Yomiuri said, quoting Vice Mayor Masanori Suzuki.

"I'm afraid many people are losing their guard against tsunami warnings," he said.

The town of Kushiro recorded the worst turnout of 0.25 percent of its 13,400 coastal residents, the Mainichi said. Many people apparently stayed home, monitoring the news of TV.

The reports blamed massive tsunami warnings in November in the region, which produced only small waves at a remote Pacific island hours later, for causing a "cry-wolf" effect.

The Meteorological Agency issues tsunami warnings even when only splashes are expected. Japan's populated coastlines are fitted with loudspeakers to order tsunami evacuations, and public broadcaster NHK immediately shuts off regular programs to serve as a disaster information channel.

That routine was implemented after a 1993 quake off Hokkaido generated a tsunami that hit a tiny nearby island. The waves and quake-triggered fires killed 200 people.

Saturday's quake occurred near the Kuril Trench, about 500 km east of Etorofu island, the largest of a disputed four-island chain known as the Northern Territories in Japan and the Kuril islands in Russia. It was about 30 km below the seabed, the agency said.

The largest wave of 40 centimeters (16 inches) hit Chichi-jima, an island of 2,000 people about 1,000 km south of Tokyo, hours later. Small tidal swells were observed elsewhere. *AP*

WORLDBRIEFS

Asia on high alert for bird flu resurgence

HANOI—Asian nations have raised their alert level as four people died of bird flu in Indonesia last week, China and South Korea reported new human infections, and the virus has spread across farms in Vietnam's southern Mekong Delta. The deaths and new poultry outbreaks are signs the virus could make a resurgence this northern winter, health experts warn. While most Asian countries are better prepared than they were a year ago to prevent or contain the spread of avian influenza, epidemiologists say there is no room for complacency about the virus that remains widespread in the region. "The concern is still there," said Hans Troedsson, head of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Vietnam, where after a one-year hiatus bird flu has spread across dozens of farms in six southern provinces in recent weeks. "What we see an indication of—not only in Vietnam with the poultry outbreaks, but also with the human cases in China and Indonesia and so on—is that the virus is still here," he said. *AFP*

Freezing weather grips central US

SPRINGFIELD, Missouri—A crippling winter storm lashed the central United States with another blast of freezing rain, sleet and snow, causing widespread power outages and tying up highways and airports. The storm was expected to continue through the weekend, laying down a coat of ice and snow from Texas to Illinois, where an ice storm warning was in effect through Monday morning. "We're in the middle of this storm," said Joe Pedigo, meteorologist for the National Weather Service in St. Louis. "Friday was the first of three waves." Farther west, frigid arctic air reached as far south as southern and central California, where plunging temperatures prompted worry about the homeless and crops. The storm in the Midwest had been blamed for at least seven deaths, and brought passenger train service in Missouri to a halt on Saturday. Trees and other debris knocked down by the weight of ice blocked tracks at several locations between St. Louis and Kansas City. *AP*

India, Pakistan peace hopes brighter after talks

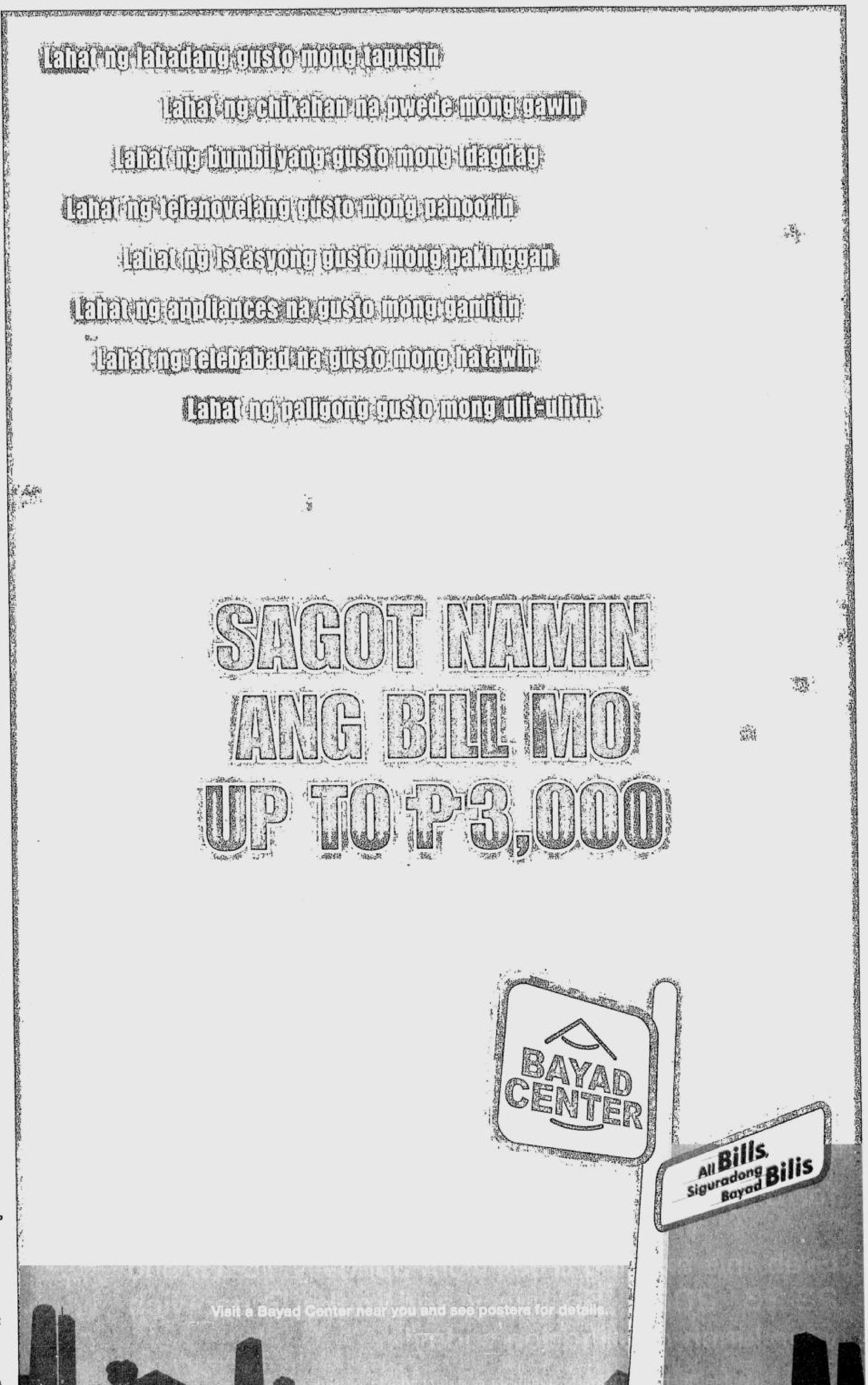
ISLAMABAD—Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee met Pakistani political party leaders on Sunday, a day after talks that heralded a new phase in a three-year-old peace process that has yet to resolve any territorial disputes. Mukherjee, who was defense minister until October, is the first Indian foreign minister to have visited Pakistan in 15 months, and while there were no fresh accords struck on Saturday there were plenty of commitments by the nuclear-armed rivals. "There is a new level of atmospherics. There is greater hope. There is greater realization on the part of both sides, but we have to wait until something concrete comes out," said Talat Masood, a former army general turned analyst. After Saturday's talks it was announced Pakistani Foreign Minister Khursheed Mehmood Kasuri will visit India in February to seal three more confidence-building measures. Accords to reduce risks of nuclear-related accidents, to ease restrictions on visa applicants and to speed up the return of people detained for accidently crossing the border will be signed. *Reuters*

Bush defends new Iraq strategy

WASHINGTON—President George W. Bush challenged lawmakers skeptical of his new Iraq plan to propose their own strategy for stopping the violence in Baghdad. "To oppose everything while proposing nothing is irresponsible," Bush said Saturday. In a pitch to lawmakers and the American people, Bush said the United States will keep the onus on the Iraqi government to take charge of security and reach a political reconciliation. He countered Democrats and his fellow Republicans who argue that Bush is sending 21,500 more US troops into Iraq on the same mission. "We have a new strategy with a new mission: Helping secure the population, especially in Baghdad," Bush said in his weekly radio address. "Our plan puts Iraqis in the lead." *AP*

Anti-ETA protests in Spain draw 250,000

MADRID—Hundreds of thousands of people took part in peace rallies on Saturday in Madrid and in the Basque city of Bilbao to protest at a deadly attack two weeks ago by the armed Basque separatist group ETA. Nearly 175,000 people staged a march through the Spanish capital under the banner "For peace, against terrorism," according to the city council. A further 80,000 gathered in Bilbao, police said. Both demonstrations were to protest at an ETA bombing in a car park at Madrid airport on Dec. 30 that killed two Ecuadorans and blew a hole in efforts by Socialist Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero to negotiate a lasting peace in the Basque region. *AFP*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WHAT'S INSIDE

- **So draws** Viet GM as Torre takes 1st loss/A30

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SPORTS

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- **Wade** turns up heat for Miami/A31

Reyes master of table; Luat second in 9-ball

EFREN "Bata" Reyes banks close to P1 million for the win.

EFREN "BATA" REYES TOWED A 1-2-3 FILIPINO FINish in the overall race and crowned himself Master of the Table on Saturday in the 2007 Derby City Classic at the Executive West Hotel in Louisville, Kentucky.

Reyes, the 1999 World Pool champion, topped the one-pocket event and placed second to American Steve Moore in the 9-ball banks to pocket the $20,000 (P974,000) champion's purse.

Reyes beat compatriots Rodolfo "Boy Samson" Luat and Francisco "Django" Bustamante to the top bonus prize.

Luat bowed to Niels Feijen, 7-6, in the 9-ball finals on Saturday and settled for the runner-up prize of $8,400 and a bonus of $3,000 for winding up second to Reyes.

Bustamante won $2,000 for placing third in the Master of the Table race.

Luat, the 50-year-old US Open runner-up, was ousted by American David Broxson in the eighth round but made it back to the Derby 9-ball tournament via the unique event's Buy-In option, in which he paid for a tourney slot for US$100.

He then subdued Larry Nevel, Shannon Murphy, Thosten Hohmann, Gabe Owen, Bustamante and Feijen, in that order, to reach the finals.

Feijen won the lag in the finals and raced to an early 2-0 lead but Luat got one back after his foe scratched on the break.

An empty Luat break in the fourth rack allowed Feijen to take a 3-1 lead before the Dutchman won the fifth on a golden break, 4-1. Luat came back into the game on nifty shots and pulled even, 5-5, after an empty Feijen break.

The Dutchman reached the hill, 6-5, after winning a battle for safety on Luat's break, but the Filipino made it hill-hill after Feijen missed the 2-7 combo.

Another safety battle for the 2-ball ensued in the final rack and Feijen won it after Luat failed to make contact with the 2-ball on a tricky kick try.

Marlon Bernardino, contributor

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Cabahug, Intal rise to the occasion

By Jasmine W. Payo

TWO AMATEUR STARS BREATHED life into what seemed like a pair of crumbling PBL campaigns.

With sniper Patrick Cabahug at the helm, Toyota Otis pulled off back-to-back stunners to stay in the hunt for an outright semifinal berth in the Silver Cup.

Harbour Centre also found hope in JC Intal to remain in the running for the bonus given to the top two teams at the end of the classification phase.

Intal and Cabahug, named Players of the Week by the league scribes, put behind their team's erratic starts by powering their squads to consecutive wins recently.

Cabahug, a 6-foot-2 shooter from Adamson University, poured in a game-high 18 points to lift the Sparks to an 82-66 triumph versus Henkel Sista last Tuesday.

But apparently, it was just a prelude to an even more sensational performance.

Four days later, the Sparks brought down league-leading Mail and More with an 81-71 victory as Cabahug sizzled with 25 markers.

"He's really capable," said coach Louie Alas after the Sparks won three games in a row and halted the Comets' six-game roll, the longest in the conference.

On the other hand, Intal took charge in the Port Masters' thrilling double overtime win versus the TeleTech Titans, 93-83, last Saturday.

"It's his breakout game," said Harbour Centre coach Jorge Gallent.

Intal fired 17 of his 27 points in the two extra periods to lead the Port Masters to their fourth straight win.

Toyota Otis and Harbour Centre now share second place with Henkel Sista and Hapee-PCU at 6-3. All four teams still have a shot at the automatic semifinal slot along with idle Mail and More.

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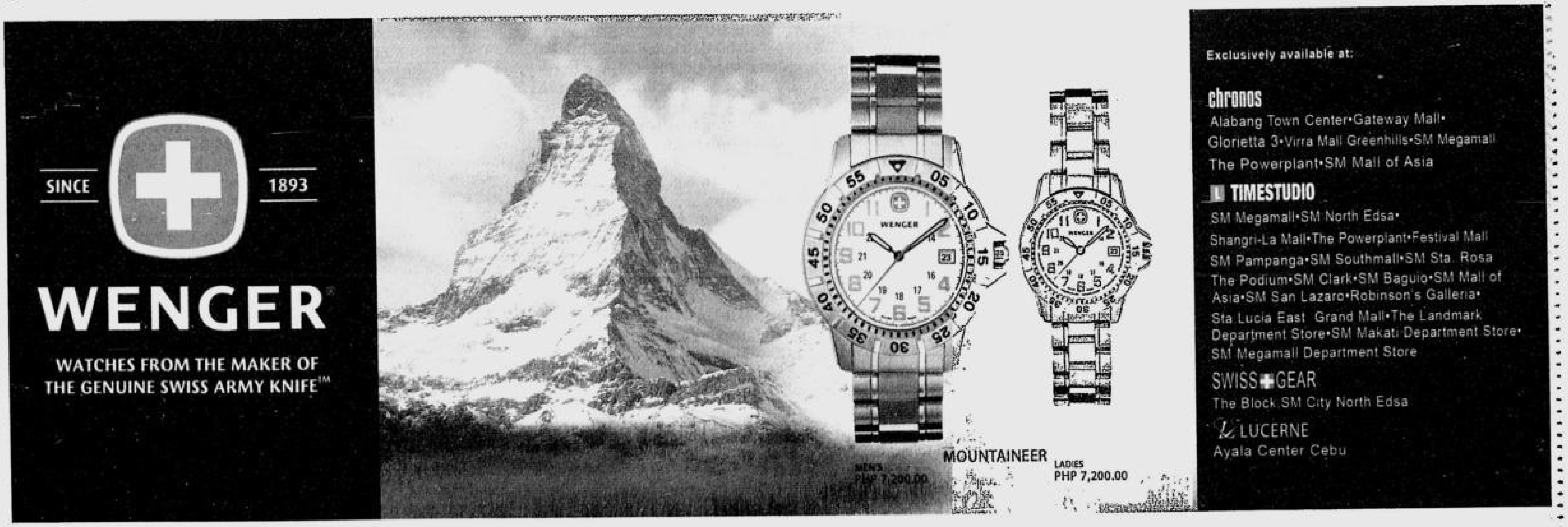

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UNSEEDED Ma. Regina Santiago returns to top-ranked Trudy Amoranto whom she stunned, 4-6, 7-5, 7-5, to bag the girls' 14-under crown. RYAN LIM

Cordero, Olivarez lead net champs

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE YOUNG TURKS OF LOCAL tennis are finally making their presence felt.

Palarong Pambansa champion Kyle Cordero and unseeded Shanine Olivarez both made a strong impression yesterday after beating their foes and ruling their respective divisions in the 18th Andrada Cup age-group championships at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

The 13-year-old Cordero bested second seed Leander Lazaro, 6-4, 2-6, 6-0, to clinch the 14-under championship, his third title in a row.

Olivarez, sister of former national players Eva and Edna Olivarez, nailed the 16-under crown after fifth seed Regina Santiago defaulted the final due to exhaustion.

It was an anti-climatic first title victory for the 13-year-old Olivarez, who created a stir on Saturday by bundling out top seed Sarah Jane Lim in the semifinals.

Santiago, nevertheless, went home with the 18-under title after outlasting top seed Trudy Amoranto, 4-6, 7-5, 7-5, in just over three hours.

Olivarez later fell to top seed Martina Guba, 6-1, 6-4, in the 14-under final, even as unseeded Marian Jane Capadocia took home the 12-under title with a 6-4, 6-2 win over Crizzable Paulino.

The power-hitting Cordero also won the Head Penn Baguio leg and the Palaro elementary single gold medal in Naga City last year.

The Grade 7 student at Colegio San Agustin, however, admitted to getting physically drained in the second set which he yielded to Lazaro.

"I got tired in the second set and Leander took advantage of it," said Cordero. "But I was able to regain my form quickly in the third set and was in complete control of the match."

John Francis Largo, Kim Ivor Saraza, Jacob Lagman and Vince Mark Tabotabo also topped their respective categories in this tournament held in honor of former longtime Philippine Tennis Association president Salvador Andrada.

The unseeded Largo ruled the boys' 18-under title after a 6-2, 6-3 shocker over fourth seed Akio Sy, while the third-seeded Saraza whipped No. 8 Jose Lorenzo Ferrer, 6-0, 6-2, for the boys' 16-under crown.

Boys' 12-under top seed Lagman, a Grade 5 student at the St. Benedict Childhood Education Centre, bested No. 5 Jurence Mendoza, 6-4, 6-0, for his fifth straight title, while the third-seeded Tabotabo took the unisex 10-under championship over second seed Eric Olivarez Jr.

So draws Viet GM as Torre takes 1st loss

Standings after 5 rounds:

4.5 pts—GM Le Quang Liem (VIE); 4.0—IM Wesley So (RP); 3.5—GM Nelson Mariano (RP), IM Darwin Laylo (RP), IM Oliver Dimakiling (RP), NM Oliver Barbosa (RP), NM Nouri Hamed (RP), GM Tu Hoang Thong (VIE), GM Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son (VIE), IM Vui Vinh (VIE); 3.0—GM Eugene Torre (RP), GM Rogelio Antonio Jr. (RP), IM Ronald Dableo (RP), GM Nguyen Anh Dung (VIE), GM Dao Thien Hai (VIE), Pung Nguyen Tuong Minh (VIE), IM Wynn Zwa Htun (MYA), FM Batchuluun Cegmed (MYA), Gundavaa Bayarsaihan (MYA)

YOUNG FILIPINO INTERNATIONAL MASTER Master Wesley So settled for a draw with Vietnamese Grandmaster Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son in the fifth round yesterday to stay on course in the 2007 Asian Zonal Chess Championships in Phu Quoc in Vietnam's Kien Giang province.

The truce for the 13-year-old whiz kid from Bacoor came after his mentor GM Eugene Torre absorbed a stinging defeat at the hands of another Vietnamese GM, Le Quang Liem, who now leads the tournament with 4.5 points.

So is in solo second with 4.0 points in the tournament that will select the zone's three representatives to the world chess championships.

He next faces IM Vui Vinh of Vietnam today. Vui downed compatriot Fide Master Duong The Anh in the fifth round.

IM Oliver Dimakiling outplayed Vietnamese FM Nguyen Huyn Minh Huy to lead the big bunch of 3.5 pointers that includes Vinh, GMs Nelson Mariano, Trong Son and Tu Hoang Thong, IM Darwin Laylo and National Masters Oliver Barbosa and Nouri Hamed.

Mariano drew his fifth match with Tu, and so did Laylo with Hamed and Barbosa with GM Rogelio Antonio Jr.

Antonio, fresh off his victory in the Motor City International Open in Michigan last month, and Torre headed the nine-man logjam for 11th place with 3.0 points.

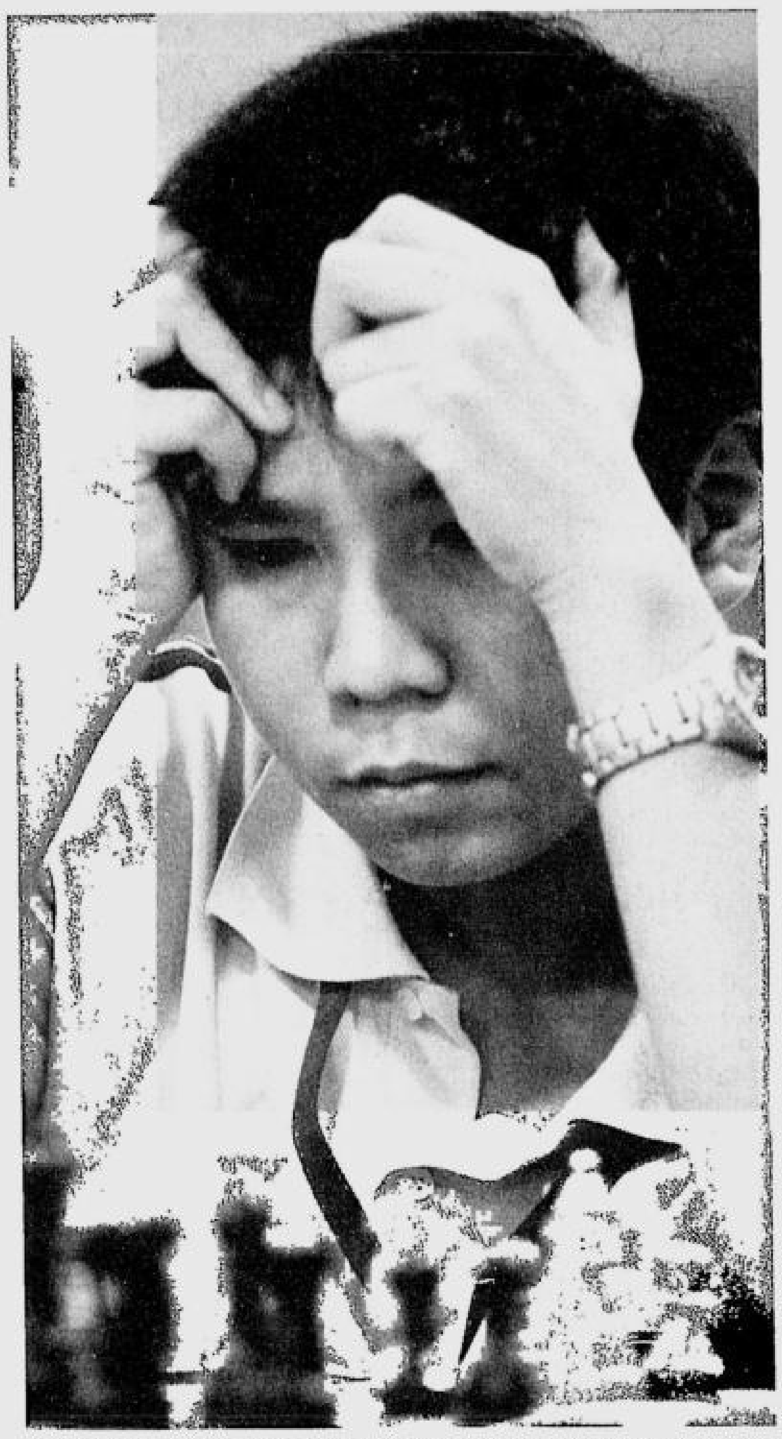
In women's play, WNM Catherine Pereña held overnight solo leader WFM Le Thanh Tu of Vietnam to a draw.

Pereña now has 3.5 points, in a tie for third to sixth places with WGM Hoang Thi Bao Tram and WFM Le Kieu Thein Kim of Vietnam and WGM Mongontuul Bathuyag of Mongolia.

Le remained on top with 4.5 points, half point ahead of countrywoman WFM Pham Le Thao Nguyen.

WIMs Beverly Mendoza and Sheerie Joy Lomibao drew their match while WNM Kimberly Jane Cunanan yielded to WFM Tran Thi Kim Loan of Vietnam.

WNM Christy Lamiel Bernales took a bye yesterday. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*



WESLEY So stays half a point behind pacesetting Viet GM. RODEL ROTONI

Ex-PBA cager Babilonia passes away

By Musong Castillo

BABILONIA: 40

VEGILDO "GIDO" Babilonia, picked by Purefoods fourth overall in the 1990 PBA Draft, died yesterday due to pneumonia. He was 40.

A native of Antipolo City who saw action for PBA teams Shell, Pepsi, San Miguel, Talk 'N Text and FedEx after a one-year stint with Purefoods, Babilonia left behind wife Narissa Cheryl and sons Thomas Isiah, Gideon Ira and Seth Isaac.

Babilonia was a product of Letran in the NCAA, where he won the junior MVP award under mentor Fred Reyes, and UST in the UAAP.

Babilonia's career flourished in Letran and he became a hot collegiate recruit for Santo Tomas. Though he never won a title in college, Babilonia was able to play in several national teams.

He had PBA career averages of 21.3 minutes, 4.7 points and 4.5 rebounds in a 10-year career that was put on hold in 1996 because of heart problems. He returned to the PBA in 1999 through the FedEx Express.

Babilonia, who served as an assistant coach at University of the East, died at 3 a.m. at Medical City in Pasig.

"He's very close to our players, he's the motivator in our team," said UE coach Dindo Pumaren. "He still practiced with us last Wednesday, he was healthy."

Babilonia's remains are at the Marian Memorial Chapel along Marcos Highway in Antipolo. Interment will be announced. *With reports from Jasmine W. Payo*

Let's stop hugging the pig

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

IT WON'T CHANGE THE WORLD, BUT this is one sentence that could help countless hypertensive beings in our pork-powered republic to be more useful.

"I won't allow my body to become the cemetery of dead animals."

No, coming from a serene survivor, it definitely was not a cheap plug.

Not the secret that had helped Michael Jordan fly.

It's an offering, a tip for those in search of inner peace and better health through a less lardy lifestyle.

Try and go meatless; be less of a nuisance.

* * *

That sensible suggestion was from actress Chin Chin Gutierez, as quoted by civic leader Nandy Charvet of San Rafael, Mandaluyong City.

Charvet swore he became an instant Gutierez fan upon hearing Chin Chin bare her sweet soul recently.

Ms Gutierez is an avowed vegetarian.

The line was apparently spoken in one television program where the actress was interviewed after having survived a fire in their residence.

She also suffered severe burns after she jumped back and tried to rescue her bedridden mother from the burning house.

* * *

That said, here's an urgent plug:

"Good Day. Please come and enjoy a fundraising show for Chin Chin Gutierez on Jan. 15, 8 p.m. onward at Merk's. Eighteen artists have already committed to perform. Mon David, Verni Varga, Giselle Sanchez, Danny and Boboy of APO, Jay Cayuca, John Lesaca and many more. Tickets are only at 1K. and 2K. for patron seats. Have a golden heart. Pls. reserve now. Call 7574720 to 21. Thank you."

That's today. Merk's is located on the third level of Greenbelt in Makati.

Charvet, swearing Gutierez is a pure embodiment of class and composure, has promised to attend.

* * *

Listen, please.

This column was being rushed a day ahead of its original Sunday deadline.

But as soon as your reporter here had completed typing that announcement, my cellphone beeped.

"Heard from the radio Chin Chin's mother has died, *patay na raw*, just now," informed Nandy Charvet who was on his way home from office Saturday.

You see, when Richard Merk sent that initial request last week to announce the concert, he said: "Please help us here. *Nasunugan ito*, her house burned down and her mother is confined at the I.C.U. She saved her mother actually. Thank you, Sir."

* * *

Naturally, my next move upon hearing the tragic news was to text back my dear friend Richard Merk to ask if the fund-raiser would proceed as scheduled.

"Sure, definitely," he said. "The more she needs us now."

Richard wanted to assure Chin Chin would be able to come to the concert.

The more she needs us now, so this reporter has cancelled an appointment in order to be there.

In the end, Chin Chin may not have totally succeeded in rescuing her dear mother.

But that pure love and heroism she had displayed should readily earn her the tag of noble.

* * *

Yes, we would invite Sen. Jinggoy Estrada to come to the concert.

We would also ask friends in the media who are closer to Manny Pangilinan to request the respected tycoon to please show up.

You're wondering why we have singled out these two gentlemen?

It's all for the simple reason that they are both involved in a grim bid to rescue Philippine basketball.

As we help and assure Chin Chin Gutierez, it's also our duty to pray for the success of this selfless mission to rescue basketball from a misguided group that has remained the greatest obstacle to the game's renewal in the Philippines.

There are also countless victims of crimes and calamities in the country.

Stop hugging the pig. Let's all do our share.

SPORTSWATCH

Yulo Memorial tilt slated at Cangolf

CANLUBANG, LAGUNA—ANOTHER BANNER FIELD IS EXPECTED TO SEE action in the Jose Yulo Memorial Tournament, Canlubang golf's annual member-guest spectacle that tees off Jan. 27 over the club's two challenging layouts. The Honorio Poblador-Larry Jalbuena team will be shooting for a repeat in the centerpiece overall category, with the Mari Hechanova-Iggy Clavecilla combine gunning for a second straight gross championship. Poblador-Jalbuena combined for 161 points last year after rounds of 80 and 81, while Hechanova and Clavecilla, the reigning Asia Pacific Senior champion, totaled 148 and 145 for 293 last year. The North and South courses will be used.

More Coach E classes open this week

MORE CLASSES OPEN THIS WEEK IN THE COACH E BASKETBALL SCHOOL with aspiring coaches and students getting personalized and scientific approach to basketball training at several venues. International Basketball Academy (IBA) president Xavy Nunag said the school has also developed coaches who later became part of the Coach E School staff. After the opening of Batangas classes on Saturday at the Mt. Malarayat Gym in Lipa City, the school will begin classes at The Zone in Makati (every Wednesday from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m.) on Jan. 17; clubsixfifty in Libis, Quezon City (every Friday from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday from 10 p.m. to 12 midnight) on Jan. 19; San Beda College (every Tuesday from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and Saturday from 10 p.m. to 12 midnight) on Jan. 23.

70 fights in Makati cockfest today

SEVENTY FIGHTS ARE ON THE ROSTER IN THE SECOND LEG OF THE Pinoy Cocker Association of the Philippines (PCAP) 5-cock derby series starting at 5 p.m. today at the Makati Coliseum with B- Meg Derby Ace and Gran Matador as major sponsors. First-leg champion Willie Villarica (WRV Gold Line) tries to extend his winning run, armed with the deadly Carol Nesmith and Nene Abello fowls. Stiff opposition will come from boxing champ Manny Pacquiao, Gerry Ramos, giant-killer Pepito Ngo, Mike Romulo, Joel Fernando, Madlambayan Brothers, Gov. Ito Ynares, Efren Canlas, Boy Royo, Edwin Yap, Boy Marzo, John Capinpin, Rey Briones and Bubot Booc, among others.

Juvic, Dottie lead major awardees

PAGUNSAN

FOR THEIR DAZZLING FEATS IN LOcal and overaseas fairways, rising Asian Tour player Juvic Pagunsan and young Dottie Ardina are the runaway choices as outstanding golfers in the SMC-PSA Annual Awards set Jan. 18 at the Entertainment Hall of the SM Mall of Asia.

The 28-year-old Pagunsan, the Asian Tour Rookie of the Year in 2006, is the major awardee in pro golf of the country's oldest media organization, while the 13-year-old Ardina clinched the amateur golfer of the year honor by virtue of her six major victories abroad, including another dominating performance in the Junior World Golf Championship in San Diego, California.

Together, they will be feted in a two-hour ceremony along with the best in local sports last year.

Boxing superstar Manny Pacquiao leads the recipients of the Athletes of the Year award together with Asian Games gold medallists Joan Tipon, Violito Payla, Antonio Gabica, Rene Catalan, pool sharks Efren "Bata" Reyes and Ronnie Alcano and world champion bowler Biboy Rivera.

The event is supported by SMC, SM Mall of Asia, Philippine Sports Commission, POC, Philippine Basketball Association, Philippine Basketball League, Welcoat Paints of owners Terry Que and Raymund Yu, Mikee Romero's Harbour Centre, Teletech, sportsman Hermie Esguerra, Air21, NBN-4 and Sports Radio.

Tuñacao dethroned as OPBF champion

JAPAN-BASED FILIPINO ROLLY (LUnas) Matsushita bucked all odds and dethroned heavy favorite Malcolm Tuñacao as OPBF bantamweight champion via a 10th-round technical decision Saturday night at Korakuen Hall in Tokyo.

Filipino referee-judge Silvestre Abainza stopped the fight in the 10th round following a second accidental clash of heads that produced a big cut on Tuñacao. The fight had to be decided by the judges' scores.

Judge Kazuo Abe saw the fight 97-95 and referee-judge Abainza had it 97-94, both for Matsushita, while judge Kazunobu Asao had it even at 95-95.

"My prayers and hard work paid off," Matsushita told the INQUIRER.

Tuñacao was making the third defense of the title he won via a lopsided decision win over Thai Kumarnthong Pluemkamol in 2005.

Meanwhile, RP bantamweight champion Michael Domingo lost in his bout to Japanese Kazuyuki Ichikawa, while the highly ranked Michael Farenas beat Japanese Takuro Matsubara in the undercard of the title fight. *Salven L. Lagumbay, Contributor*

Real coach axes David

MADRID, SPAIN—DAVID BECKHAM WON'T play again for Real Madrid after announcing his departure at the end of the season for the Los Angeles Galaxy of the MLS, coach Fabio Capello said Saturday.

"He is not going to play any more. He will practice, but he is not going to play," Capello said at a news conference.

Capello faced a difficult decision due to the size and importance of Beckham's deal with the Galaxy.

"He is a great professional, but he already has a very important contract with another club," Capello said, explaining the decision to allow Beckham to train with Madrid but not play.

BECKHAM AP

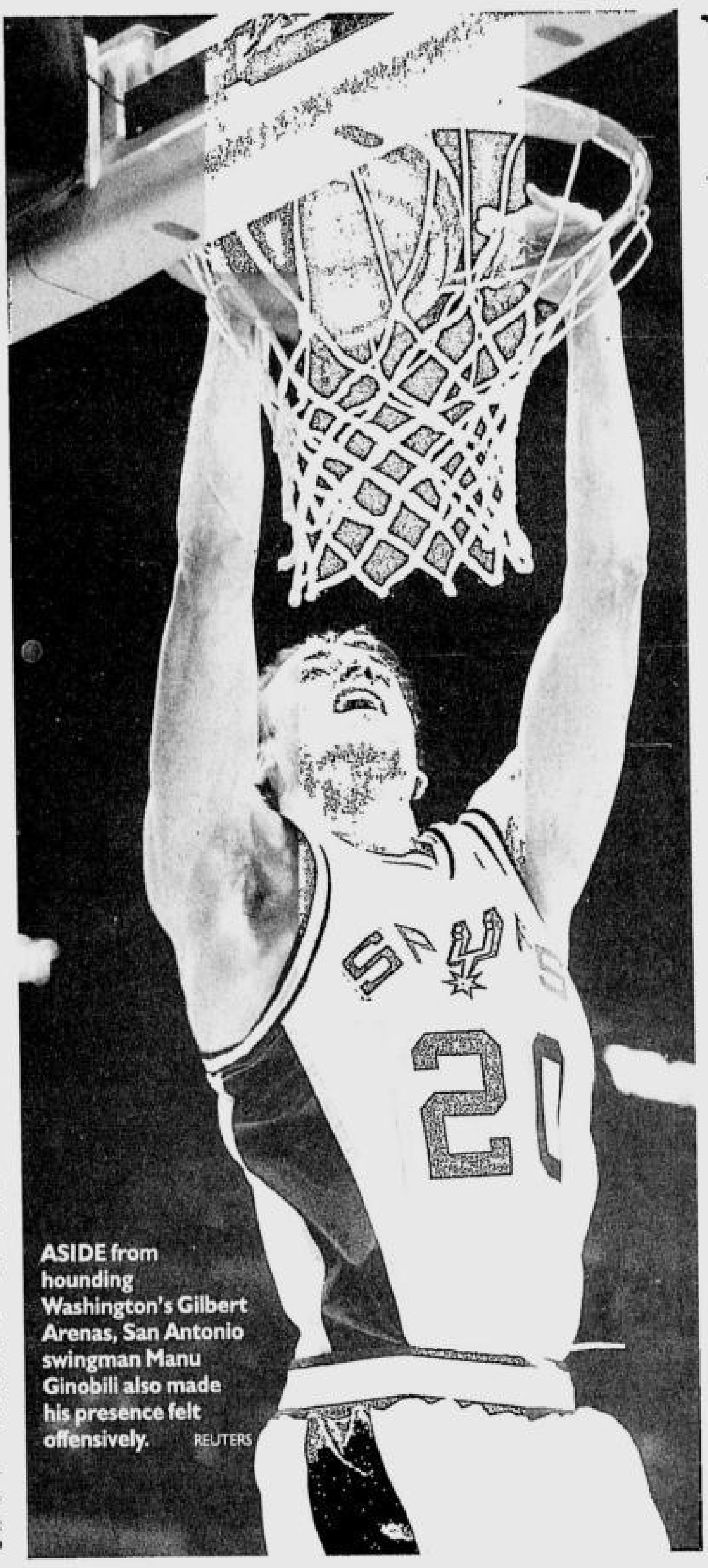
Beckham's spokesman Simon Oliveira said the 31-year-old midfielder would "continue to give his full commitment and professionalism to the club."

"David is surprised at the quotes from Fabio Capello as nobody from the club has informed him of their intentions," Oliveira said in a statement. "As far as David is aware, he has a contract for the remainder of the season and he remains dedicated to the club and its supporters."

Beckham announced Thursday that he will not extend his contract with Madrid when it expires in June and is instead leaving for Galaxy on a five-year deal that will reportedly be worth a total of US$250 million including endorsements.

Madrid would not want to contemplate the consequences of a major injury to Beckham while he is still with the club. At the same time, fans at the Bernabeu are unlikely to be happy without a chance to bid one of their "Galacticos" goodbye.

Capello looks unlikely to reverse the decision for Beckham not to play again. Capello said he'd not spoken with Beckham since the latter announced his new deal. *AP*



ASIDE from hounding Washington's Gilbert Arenas, San Antonio swingman Manu Ginobili also made his presence felt offensively. REUTERS

Wade turns up heat for Miami

Garnett achieves milestone

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH—DWYANE WADE HAS THE MIAMI Heat looking more like the reigning National Basketball Association champions.

Wade scored 32 points and Jason Williams added 20 as the Heat won their fourth straight game Saturday, downing the Utah Jazz, 119-110.

The Heat had suffered through a five-game losing streak as Wade rested a sore right wrist.

While the Heat are still without injured superstar center Shaquille O'Neal, and coach Pat Riley has taken an indefinite leave of absence to address his own health concerns, Wade's return has provided a tremendous boost.

On Saturday, Wade made 5-of-12 shots and sank 21-of-23 free throws. He also had 10 assists and a season-high six steals.

In the second quarter, Wade converted a three-point play and Williams drained a 3-pointer with 1:28 left as the Heat built a 61-44 lead. Miami scored 39 points in the period.

The Heat lead by as many as 22 points in the third quarter before the Jazz made a late charge.

Utah pulled to 99-92 on Carlos Boozer's 16-foot jumper with 9:37 remaining. But Miami answered with an impressive 10-0 surge highlighted by two 3-pointers by Jason Kapono.

In Minneapolis, Kevin Garnett scored 32 points and surpassed 10,000 rebounds for his career as the Minnesota Timberwolves beat the New Jersey Nets, 109-98, to win a game by more than six points for the first time this season.

Garnett pulled down 14 rebounds to become the 32nd player in league history to reach the milestone. Mark Blount added 15 points and seven rebounds for the Timberwolves, who used a 12-1 run midway through the fourth quarter to win for the ninth time in 12 games.

For the first time this season, the Wolves won a game by more than six points and improved to 6-1 in 2007.

In Chicago, Ben Gordon made the most of a rare appearance in the Bulls' starting lineup on Saturday, scoring 24 points to lead five players in double figures for the Bulls in a 111-66 drubbing of Memphis.

Kirk Hinrich had 20 points and eight assists and Luol Deng scored 18 points for the Bulls, who snapped a three-game losing streak.

Chicago made it look easy, despite the absence of Ben Wallace and Andres Nocioni. Wallace sat out with a sore back and Nocioni was serving a one-game suspension for elbowing New Jersey's Mikki Moore on Thursday.

Gordon started the first six games of the season before bringing his scoring power off the bench. He is averaging 22.5 points as a reserve.

In San Antonio, Gilbert Arenas, red-hot in late December and the first week of the new year, has gone cold, along with his Washington Wizards.

Arenas shot poorly for the fourth straight game Saturday as the Wizards fell, 93-80, to San Antonio Spurs, who posted their fourth straight victory.

Second in the league in scoring at 30 points per game, Arenas is in a slump similar to the one he went through earlier this season and dragging the Wizards down with him.

The All-Star guard has made just 23-of-74 shots in his last four games, three of which the Wizards have lost.

Against the Spurs, Arenas made just 6-of-20 shots and scored 17 points, his lowest total since managing 10 in a loss at Chicago on December 2.

He never got untracked as he was hounded by Manu Ginobili and Bruce Bowen, a pair of very good defenders. *AFP, AP*

COMPLETE RESULTS: Charlotte 89, Philadelphia 83; Detroit 81, Boston 73; San Antonio 93, Washington 80; Minnesota 109, New Jersey 98; Chicago 111, Memphis 66; Miami 119, Utah 110; Phoenix 107, Orlando 101; Houston 115, Sacramento 111; (OT) Cleveland 104, LA Clippers 92

Signs point to Federer-Nadal finale

FEDERER: Numbers don't lie AP

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA—ROGER, RAFA, the rest.

Roger Federer is on the cusp of a record for most consecutive weeks atop the men's tennis rankings, regardless of what he does at the Australian Open.

Rafael Nadal owns the record for most weeks at No. 2.

With seven of the last eight Grand Slam titles between them, it's hardly surprising they're heavily favored to meet in the Australian Open final on Jan. 28.

"If I didn't play so well, he would have been No. 1 a long time ago," Federer said in a small tribute to Nadal on the eve of the year's first Grand Slam. "He's my No. 1 competitor. The numbers don't lie."

Nadal missed the last Australian Open because of injuries and had a scare last week in Sydney, withdrawing from a tune-up tournament with a groin strain. Retiring in Sydney was just a precaution, he said.

"I feel 100 percent now—that's the most important thing."

Even though he has a winning record against Federer, beating him in four finals last year, Nadal shares one thing in common with the chasing pack: he's almost out of words.trying to describe Federer's success.

"For me he's one of the best in history, for sure," he said.

Federer made the final at all four majors last season, winning three of them. Nadal's title defense at the French Open broke Federer's bid for a season Grand Slam, something no player has achieved since Rod Laver in 1969.

With 12 titles and a 92-5 season—Federer is so far ahead in the rankings that he is guaranteed of breaking Jimmy Connors' world record of 160 weeks at No. 1 by the end of next month.

He's held the top ranking since the week after winning the 2004 Australian Open, the second of his nine major titles.

So where does that leave Nadal? He has occupied the No. 2 position for 78 weeks, a record for second spot according to the ATP. *AP*

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SONY OPEN

Howell leads; Fujikawa marches on

HONOLULU—CHARLES HOWELL III has another chance to win the Sony Open, and he has never felt more prepared.

Howell devoted his offseason to putting and it continued to pay off Saturday when he birdied his last two holes for a 5-under 65, giving him a one-shot lead over Luke Donald going into the final round.

Still in the mix with the biggest smile at Waialae was 16-year-old Tadd Fujikawa, the pint-sized sophomore from Honolulu who delivered more surprises and allowed everyone to dream big. A day after becoming the youngest player in 50 years to make the cut on the PGA Tour, he shot another 66 and was tied for eighth, six shots behind.

"I don't have anything to lose right now," Fujikawa said.

Big things were expected of Howell when he was rookie of the year in 2001 and captured the Michelob Championship a year later. But the victories dried up, and a technically sound game has been held back by putting.

He took only 25 putts in the third round, ranks second in the tournament in putting and was at 13-under 197.

Donald had a chance to join him with a long eagle putt on the last hole, but it stayed left of the cup. He shot a 69 and will be paired with Howell in the final group Sunday.

Paul Goydos was in control until missing a 6-foot birdie putt on the 12th that would have given him a two-shot lead. He took consecutive bogeys down the stretch and wound up with a 70 to finish at 11-under 199.

Steve Stricker might have been the only player at Waialae not surprised by Fujikawa. They played together in a pro-am Monday, and as the three-time PGA Tour winner kept writing down scores, he noticed he was getting beat. The kid shot 65 and beat him by four. *AP*

SC acquits Campomanes

THE SUPREME COURT HAS ACquitted former International Chess Federation president Florencio Campomanes, reversing the decision by the Sandiganbayan to convict him of failure to make an accounting of funds used to stage the 30th World Chess Olympiad in 1992.

In an 18-page decision dated Dec. 19, the SC Third Division cleared Campomanes after the prosecution failed to cite the correct law that would have upheld the Sandiganbayan ruling.

The decision penned by Associate Justice Antonio Carpio said the Ombudsman, through its Special Prosecutor, had failed to prove that Campomanes was required to account to the Commission on Audit at least P12.8 million he had received from the government.

In effect, the SC reversed the Sandiganbayan's decision, saying there was no legal basis to compel Campomanes to make an accounting to the COA.

CAMPOMANES

Furthermore, the high tribunal pointed out that Campomanes is not a public officer and therefore not required to submit an accounting.

The anti-graft court has convicted Campomanes for violating Article 218 in relation to Article 222 of the Revised Penal Code and was meted the penalty of a P6,000 fine.

However, the Supreme Court rejected the contention that the COA has the authority to demand an accounting from Campomanes.

"It took 10 years but I kept my sanity and sense of humor. I just could not see being penalized for bringing to our country the best organized World Chess Olympiad ever," said Campomanes.

Republic of the Philippines
ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT
Pilar Street, Zamboanga City

SECTION I. INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Zamboanga City Water District, through its Bids and Awards Committee I (BAC I), invites Suppliers/Manufacturers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

LOT No.	PR No.	Brief Description	Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)	Cost of of Bid Documents	Date of Issuance of Bid Documents	Date of Pre-Bid Conference	Date of Submission/ Opening of Bids
1	9433	Rice Best (Quality)	P 617,400.00	P 600.00	January 10 to 17, 2007	January 18, 2007	January 30, 2007
2	9271	Stainless Water Tank, original factory fabricated for tank lorries, elliptical cross-section, 90 drums (18,000 liters) capacity, approximately 22.5 ft. long; to be mounted on the chasis of 1 10 wheeler Hyundai Truck (with mounting/installation	P 900,000.00	P 900.00	January 10 to 17, 2007	January 18, 2007	
3	9272	Reconditioned Water Tanker, 6 wheeler, with 10,000 liters capacity stainless steel tank complete with a water pump, fittings & accessories; ISUZU engine powered truck with new tires, spare tire, jack, tire wrench. Unit must be registered with the LTO in the name of ZCWD and covered with a comprehensive insurance from the GSIS. Truck color: Tahiti Blue	1,450,000.00	P 1,000.00	January 10 to 17, 2007	January 18, 2007	January 30, 2007
4	9472, 9470, 9282 & 9423	Brass Fittings & Cast Iron Fittings for Vitali Water System & Stock Replenishment	1,993,100.00	P 1,000.00	January 12 to 19, 2007	January 23, 2007	February 6, 2007
5	9469 & 9464	PVC Pipes & Fittings for Vitali Water Systems & for Stock Replenishment	1,669,950.00	P 1,000.00	January 12 to 19, 2007	January 23, 2007	February 6, 2007

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules & Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, and is restricted to organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, as specified in Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183). Only Bids from bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process of the Eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with lowest calculated bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine its reponsiveness to the technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the ZAMBOANGA CIT WATER DISTRICT and inspect the Bidding documents at the address given below during office hours (8:00–5:00 p.m.).

All Bids must be accompanied by a ***Bid Security in the form of Cash, Certified Check, Cashier's and Manager's Check in the amount of One Percent (1%) of the Approved Budget Cost.*** Late Bids shall not be accepted.

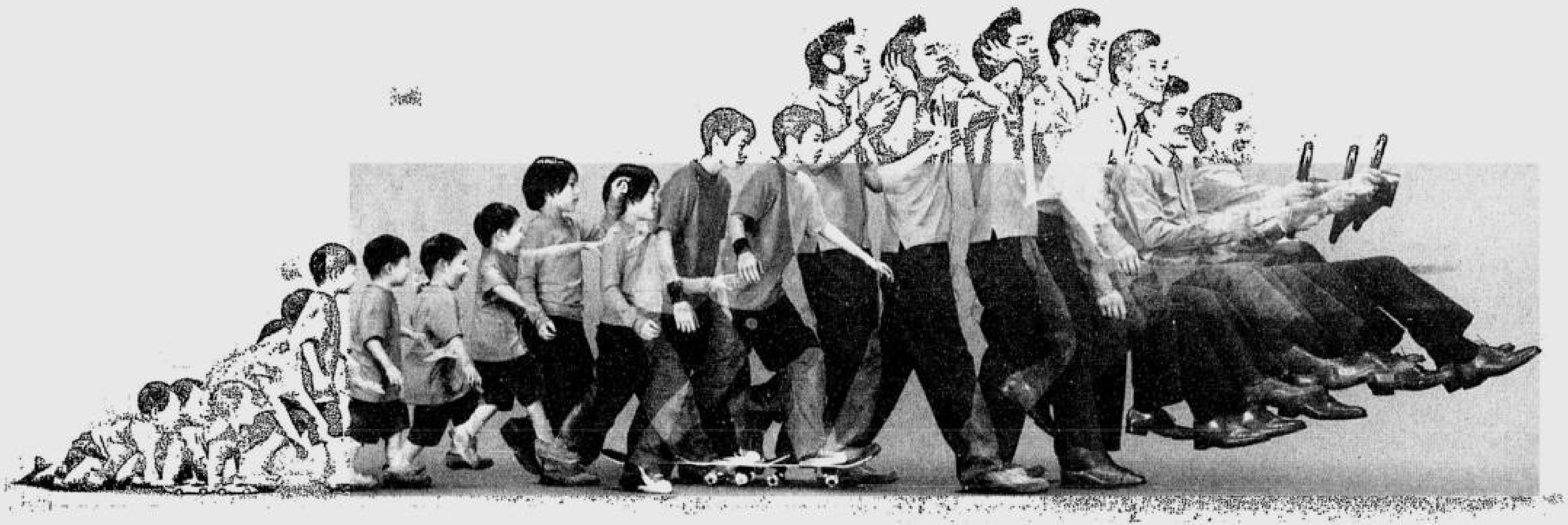
Bid Opening shall be on the 2nd Floor, ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT Main Office Building, Pilar St., Zamboanga City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidder's representatives who choose to attend at the address below.

The ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT
Mr. Noel M. Kawaguchi
Pilar St., Zamboanga City 7000
Telephone No. (062) 991 1556; Fax (062) 991-2799

(Sgd.) ARNULFO A. ALFONSO
BAC I Chairman

(PDI – January 15, 2007)



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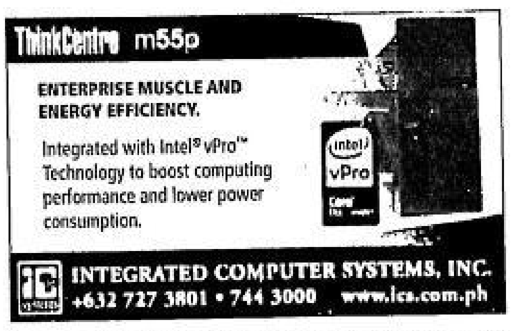

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Gov't budget deficit at a low ₱62B in '06

BIR, Customs collection targets for 2007 lowered

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT LIKELY ENDED 2006 WITH A BUDGET deficit of about P62 billion, way below the programmed ceiling of P125 billion.

The emerging 2006 fiscal deficit was contained in a full-year fiscal performance assessment presented during the inter-agency Development Budget Coordination Committee on Friday. The final figure will be officially announced on Feb. 14.

The government was able to keep its budget deficit in check last year largely due to underspending, especially with Congress' failure to enact the 2006 national budget.

The government operated under the budget of 2005, which was about P100 billion less than intended. The Congress approved in October a supplemental budget of P46.9 billion, but officials said it came too late for line agencies to spend on their programs for 2006.

GOV'T/B2

IN THIS ISSUE

Rice producers seen to yield little in '07 /B6

Experts see good year ahead despite risks /B10

ABS-CBN eyes IPO for subsidiary

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM DISTRIBUTOR ABS-CBN Global is looking at a possible public listing in either Hong Kong or Singapore, Asia's major financial hubs, by next year, INQUIRER sources said.

ABS-CBN Global's subscriber base grew 20 percent year-on-year in the third quarter, translating to 1.4 million viewers worldwide by end-September.

The sources said the group of television giant ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. was now studying an option to fold in ABS-CBNnow! into ABS-CBN Global as part of a study to rational ABS-CBN's current businesses. ABS-CBNnow! is a video and audio streaming subscription service on the Internet that provides Filipinos worldwide with access to news and entertainment shows from ABS-CBN.

ABS-CBN earlier said it planned to take public ABS-CBN Global by 2008 through the Stock Exchange of Singapore, company chair Eugenio Lopez III said last year.

ABS-CBN Global, which accounted for 74 percent of the company's revenues in the third quarter, derives the bulk of its revenues from subscription sales of its cable and direct-to-home service.

ABS-CBN's net income for the first nine months of the year surged 70 percent to P694 million from P409 million a year ago, reflecting the continuous improvement in its core business. Despite an industry-wide slowdown in advertising spending, airtime revenues were maintained at P8 billion in the first nine months last year. Revenues were also boosted by license fees from the migration of DTH (direct-to-home) subscribers in North America to DirecTV's platform.

Expense growth, on the other hand, remained controlled as the company kept a tight rein on its operating expenses.

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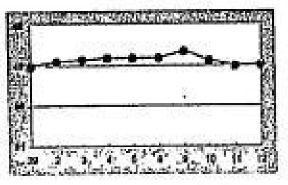

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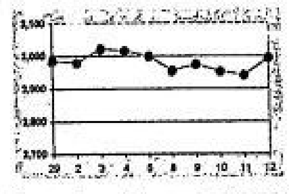

(See stock market report on Page B4)

Stocks seen to ease

STOCK PRICES MAY EASE AFTER THE SHARP gains in the past weeks but traders and fund managers remain optimistic that overall sentiment remains bullish in the long term.

"We may see some repositioning on blue chips this week," said Joseph Roxas, president at Eagle Equities Inc.

AB Capital Securities said in a weekly note to clients that in the absence of any strong negative catalyst, the market continued to stay on its upward trend.

"However, the market should continue to encounter some challenges in convincingly breaking out of the 3,000 resistance level. Volatility was relatively high last week, so there is a good possibility that volatility will decrease and prices will consolidate in the near term. The main index's trading range will be between 2,850 and 3,000. Market fundamentals remain very positive as shown by the steady decline in interest rates and the strength of the peso," AB Capital Securities said.

The brokerage added that the brewing political jitters ahead of the May elections might keep investors at bay but positive catalysts continued to influence market sentiment

STOCKS/B4

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Moving backward on the BOT Law

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Cielito F. Habito

THOSE OF US WHO ARE ABLE TO TRAVEL around the region know how shamefully behind we are relative to our neighbors in infrastructure. With government resources simply too limited to provide for our tremendous infrastructure backlog, the Philippines became a pioneer in tapping private sector funds to provide public infrastructure, through the build-operate-transfer (BOT) scheme and its many variants. It was thus a matter of necessity that we became the first country to come up with a BOT Law (RA 6957) in 1990 to provide the legal framework for such private sector participation (PSP) in public infrastructure.

Questionable revisions

We have since learned many valuable lessons—including some rather costly ones—from our PSP experience. Our BOT rules have undergone several changes to incorporate 16 years' worth of such lessons, through amendments to the original BOT Law itself (via RA 7718) and to its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). In 2004, another round of comprehensive amendments to the IRR was initiated by the BOT Center. But last year, just as the new amended IRR was about to be issued after two years of careful and extensive consultation and deliberation, the Palace decided to keep it from seeing the light of day. Instead, it has put forward its own major revisions that appear to be motivated by a faulty appreciation of these valuable lessons, at best, or by ulterior motives, at worst. Even the professionals in government tasked with ensuring the integrity of the PSP process are reportedly uncomfortable—to put it mildly—with the Palace-sponsored amendments. While very few are aware of the issue, it is actually a matter of great concern to the general public that deserves wide deliberation.

Cutting out ICC

The Palace-sponsored amendments, in essence, eliminate the role of the inter-agency Investment Coordination Committee (ICC) chaired by the Department of Finance and technically supported by the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) in evaluating and approving major BOT and other PSP projects. Instead, it is entirely left to the implementing government departments, agencies and local government units (LGUs) to evaluate and approve their proposed BOT/PSP projects. The ICC would be limited to approving only the list of BOT projects submitted by the agencies and LGUs, and setting the required rate of return for unsolicited BOT projects.

The rationale is purportedly to expedite the approval process by cutting the red tape in pursuing privately funded infrastructure projects. At face value, this looks good, and would certainly be welcomed particularly by the private sector proponents of such projects. The problem is, our colorful 16 years of experience with PSP (including infamous examples like Naia-3 and Casecnan) tell us that the Palace amendment may be like letting the crocodiles guard the zoo. By devolving evaluation and approval of BOT/PSP projects to the proponent agencies and LGUs themselves, we could indeed reduce the time needed for such approvals—but at what cost?

Dangerous devolution

The law mandates (through the Administrative Code and the Neda Charter) that all major capital projects pursued by the government should be reviewed by the ICC, for very critical reasons. This rigorous review considers the legal, financial, technical, fiscal, economic and development policy implications of such projects. ICC is also the forum for ensuring proper coordination in the planning and implementation of major infrastructure projects of various agencies. When DPWH and DOTC both planned on going above the ground with their respective C-5 and LRT-2 projects at the Aurora Boulevard/C-5 intersection, for example, it took ICC to settle their bitter debate. It is also at the ICC where the macroeconomic implications, including the fiscal, monetary and foreign exchange impacts of major projects are considered, a perspective that individual departments and LGUs do not have. But even at the narrow project level, agencies and LGUs are generally ill-equipped to undertake proper project appraisal.

This move to reduce ICC's function in PSP projects to being a mere clearinghouse, apart from violating the law, exposes the country to great risks that the credit-rating agencies, the donor community and men and women of integrity in the government have begun to express strong concern about. Indeed, it is a matter that should be of great concern to the general public as a whole.

Vested interests?

Time and again, Neda and the ICC have been unfairly seen as an "unnecessary hurdle" to getting government projects done. It was never easy for me, when I headed Neda during the Ramos years, to convince colleagues in government and the President himself, that the ICC review process served a very important purpose—and that was, to put it tongue-in-cheek, to protect them from congressional blue ribbon committee investigations and even lawsuits that could come even long after leaving government.

One cannot help wonder if these amendments to short-circuit the BOT approval process are being pushed by parties with much to gain, personally or politically, from expediting questionable PSP deals and avoiding the often difficult but legitimate questions raised by the ICC. Naia-3, Casecnan, and many other past problematic BOTs clearly tell us we need to tighten the rules, not loosen them. Eliminating from the process the role of a body committed to uphold the public interest raises questions very critical to the future of this country indeed.

Comments are welcome at chabito@ateneo.edu

Gov't . . .

From page B1

The government's actual budget deficit from January to November stood at only P58.32 billion, 52-percent below the ceiling of P123 billion set under the fiscal program for the period.

During the same meeting on Friday, the DBCC also agreed to slash the 2007 revenue targets of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and Bureau of Customs to factor in lower interest rates and a stronger peso exchange rate against the US dollar.

DBCC documents showed that the BIR's target collection was trimmed by P18.24 billion to P765 billion from P784 billion.

Lower interest rates, while beneficial to corporate profits, also result in lower bond yields and thus translate to lower collection of withholding taxes on government securities by the BIR.

For 2007, the DBCC forecasts interest rates based on the benchmark 91-day treasury bills to fall to 4-4.5 percent, lower than the 5.5- to 6.5-percent projection during the previous review of economic assumptions last November.

DBCC documents explained that the lower interest rate forecast was in view of the "decelerating inflation, ample liquidity in the system and the sustained improvements in the national government's fiscal position and the strong demand for government securities."

"Strong foreign exchange inflows will continue to drive the expansion in domestic liquidity. Inflows are expected to come from overseas Filipino workers' remittances as well as from foreign investments as a result of fiscal reform and improving economic fundamentals," it explained.

The DBCC also agreed to trim the BOC's collection target for this year by P7 billion to P228 billion from P235 billion because of the peso's continued strengthening.

A stronger peso results in a lower peso equivalent for the BOC's dollar earnings from import tariffs and duties.

The DBCC also approved a revision in its foreign exchange assumption to factor in the peso's surge to six-year highs against the dollar. The assumption for this year was changed to a range of 48-50 to $1 from the earlier forecast of 50-52.

But despite the lower collection target for the two major collection agencies, the total government revenue target for 2007 was maintained by the DBCC at P1.12 trillion and the budget deficit cap at P63 billion.

The government expects to generate P25 billion from the sale of its remaining stake in telecommunication giant Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. by April.

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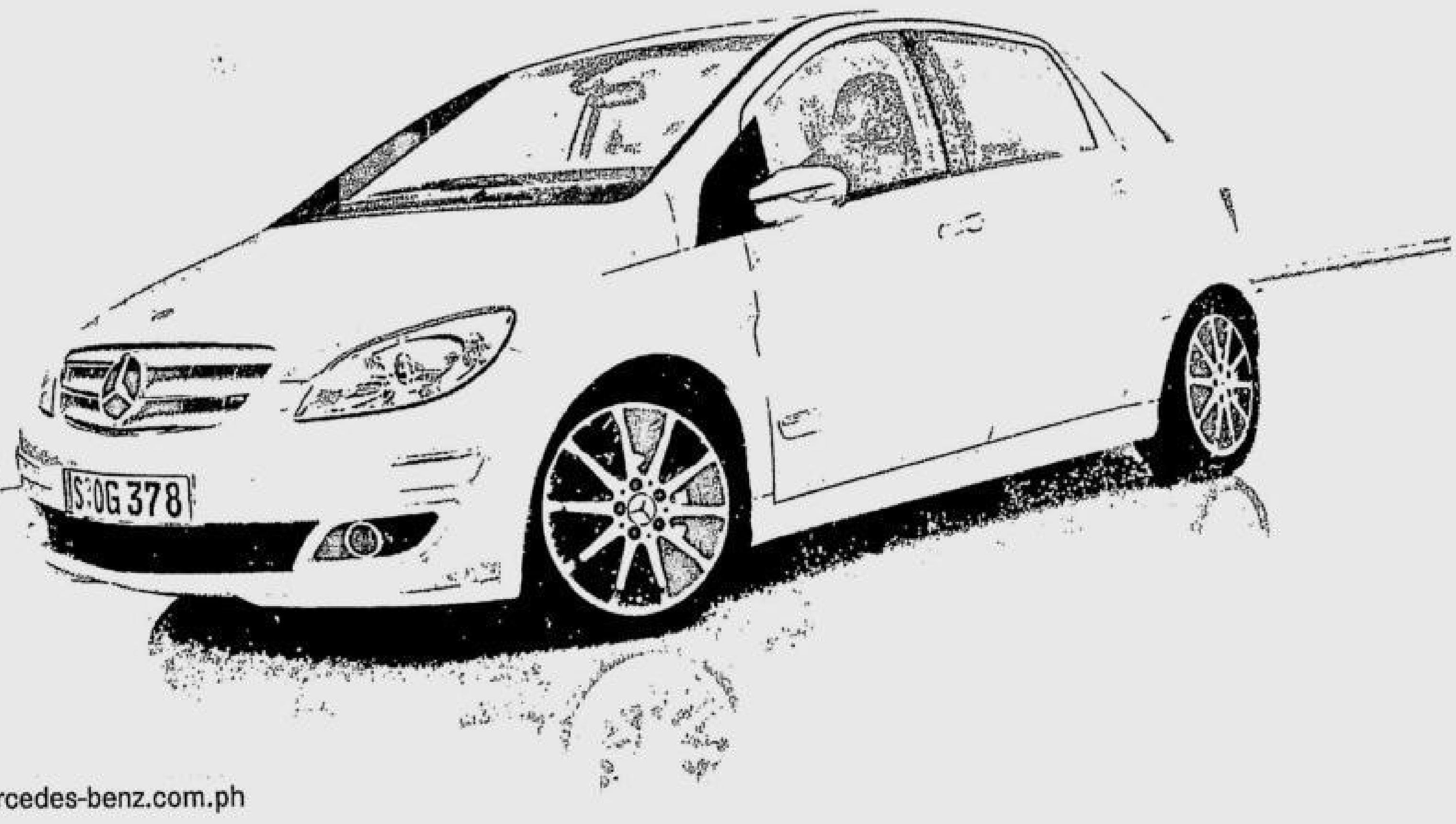

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US investment bank sees boom in bank lending in RP this year

By Doris C. Dumlao

Declining interest rates to create demand for loans

THE ERA OF "LAZY BANKING" IS OVER.

US-based investment bank Morgan Stanley sees a boom in local credit activity for the first since the Asian currency crisis in 1997 as the Philippines enters a new credit cycle fueled by falling interest rates, a healthier banking sector and a rosier economic picture.

Over the next 12 months, local commercial bank lending could expand by 15-18 percent given the country's restructured economic fundamentals and bank balance sheets, Morgan Stanley analysts Chetan Ayha and Deyi Tan said in a Jan. 3 commentary titled "Philippines Economics: The Beginning of a New Credit Cycle."

The report said a combination of structural changes implemented by the government and increased global appetite for emerging market assets had brought about a significant reduction in risk premium in the Philippines over the last three years.

"Following the sharp decline in government bond yields, banks' lending rates have also started to decline over the past three months, triggering the first credit cycle after nine years," it said.

The restructuring of the banking sector's balance sheet, resulting in a decline in nonperforming loans and comfortable capital adequacy ratio, promises to kickstart a new credit cycle, Morgan Stanley said.

It said risk aversion toward loan assets caused by the large level of NPLs in the banking system and attractive yields on government bond yields in previous years resulted in some degree of "lazy" banking, referring to a focus on investing in risk-free government bonds instead of corporate or retail loans.

"However, with the further sharp decline in government bond yields over the last 12 months and a flattening government bond yield curve, banks are being forced to look into loan asset growth," the report said.

"Banks are likely to cut lending rates further. The magnitude of the cuts is likely to be higher for consumer loans, where the spreads have been significantly higher," it projected.

Morgan Stanley said it did not come as a surprise that growth in local bank lending accelerated to an eight-year high of 11.2 percent as of end-October against an average of 4.5 percent and 1.7 percent in the third and second quarters of 2006.

"After nine years of sub-par credit growth, we believe the Philippines is about to see a major credit cycle driven by a sharp decline in the cost of capital," the report said.

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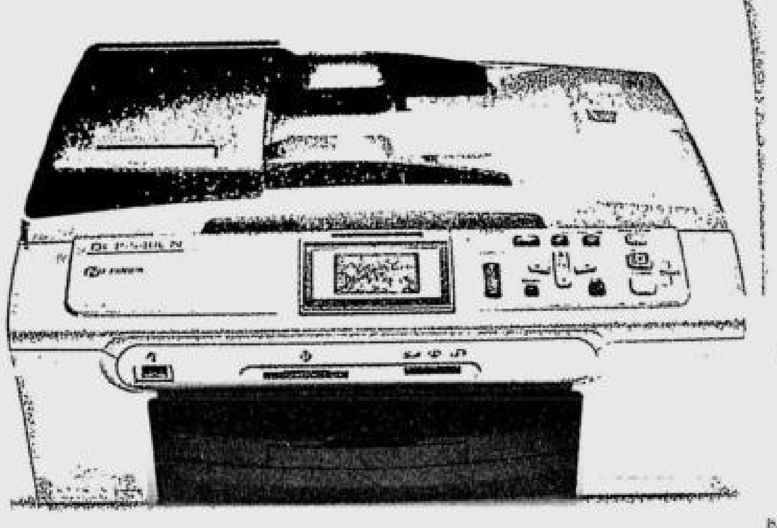

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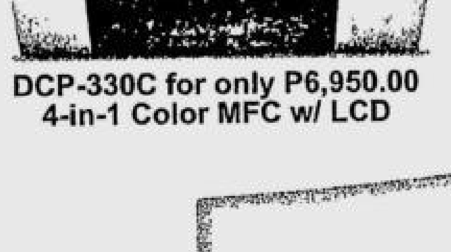

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Bond bourse shows sharp rise in trading volume

Daily average rose to ₱5.6B in 4th quarter of 2006

By Daxim L. Lucas

TRADING VOLUME IN THE COUNTRY'S FIXED-income exchange rose sharply in 2006 as the system had its first full year of operations following a controversial start in the previous year.

Philippine Dealing and Exchange Corp. (PDEx) said trading volume for government securities last year reached P787.4 billion, up 80 percent from the previous year's P437.7 billion.

The 10,652 transactions among participating banks sealed in 2006 were also up by 70 percent from only 6,266 transactions in 2005.

"The growth figures are quite significant, particularly if you take into account all the challenges we faced during the year," PDEx president and chief operating officer Cesar Crisol said in a statement.

The 2005 trading data arose from 189 trading days, as the firm started operations only on March 28,2005. In 2006, however, the exchange had 243 trading days.

The exchange pointed out that even if it were to count only transactions that occurred from March 28, 2006 onward, the resulting volume and number of transactions would still reflect a 59- and 42-percent growth, respectively, over 2005.

"The numbers provide us with a reference against which we can anchor both our efforts this past year and, more importantly, our optimism for the future," Crisol added.

PDEx said the average daily volume increased by P924 million in 2006 over the previous year's levels.

On a quarterly basis, however, the actual increase was much more significant. From a P1.8-billion daily average in the fourth quarter of 2005, PDEx ended 2006 with a daily average trade volume of P5.6 billion in the fourth quarter.

"This is another operating indicator that provides us with guarded optimism of the near future," Crisol added. "The bond exchange program of the Bureau of Treasury provided added impetus to increasing the daily volumes and that has to be duly recognized. Overall though, I do think we are making the critical forward steps."

In 2005, the five most traded fixed-rate treasury notes had remaining tenors of three years with the most traded being government bonds maturing in January 2009. For last year, this particular security was only the fifth most traded treasury note.

PDEx said the four most liquid treasury notes in 2006 had remaining tenors of four to nine years.

Stocks . . .

From page B1

such as the latest drop in local treasury bill rates, which fell to historical lows at 3.795 percent.

Hints of a credit-rating upgrade are looking more imminent on indications that the government may pay more of its debts ahead of schedule, AB Capital also noted.

Standard & Poor's continues to be optimistic about the country's outlook this year especially if the sale of power assets proceed, the brokerage firm said. The credit-rating agency noted in a report that the government was able to reduce its fiscal deficit from 2.1 percent of gross domestic product in 2005 to only 1.5 percent in 2006.

The peso's strength also continued to boost the government's coffers as every P1 appreciation against the dollar reduces its debt by P5 billion, AB Capital Securities noted.

"This effectively allows the potential savings to be channeled to more government infrastructure programs or for further cutdown in debt. In 2006, the government effectively prepaid some of its obligations by buying back $575 million worth of Brady bonds and paying a $70-million loan with the Asian Development Bank," the brokerage firm said.

Meantime, BDO Trust head of strategy Fitzgerald Aclan said the market would watch the US market and emerging market developments specially with the release of US economic data.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

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CLUB	SHARES AVAILABLE SELLER	BUYER
Alabang Country Club A/B*	1,100,000/1,300,000*	1,050,000
Alta Vista A/B*/Corp.**	-	300,000/Pls. Call*/Pls Call**
Baguio Country Club	-	500,000
Camp John Hay	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Canlubang Golf	-	420,000
Canyon Woods	100,000	-
Capitol Hills	50,000	-
Cebu Country Club	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Celebrity Sports	Pls. Call	90,000
Club Filipino	90,000	-
Eagleridge A/B*/C**	280,000*/250,000**	Pls. Call*
Eastridge A/B*	Pls. Call	-
Everest	65,000	-
Fairways & Bluewater	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Forest Hills A/B*/C**	90,000/Pls. Call*	120,000*
Luisita Golf	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Manila Golf Corporate	Pls. Call	12,500,000
Manila Golf Individual	Pls. Call	11,500,000
Manila Polo	2,600,000	2,700,000
Manila Southwoods A/B*	290,000/Pls. Call*	-
Makati Sports Club A	200,000	-
Manila Yacht Club Ind.	280,000	-
Metropolitan Club A/B*	160,000	-
Mimosa Ind./C2*/C3**	Pls. Call	Pls. Call/550,000**
Mt. Malarayat A	180,000	-
Orchard A/B*/C**	160,000/Pls. Call*/250,000**	150,000/300,000*
Punta Fuego	Pls Call	Pls. Call
Quezon City Sports Club	150,000	Pls. Call
Riviera Golf A/B*/C**	60,000/170,000*/250,000**	Pls. Call*
Rockwell Leisure Club	Pls. Call	Pls. Call
Royale Tagaytay CC	65,000	-
Sherwood A/B*/C**	70,000/150,000**	100,000*
Sta. Elena Golf A/B*	-	1,300,000
Subic Golf	190,000	-
Summit Point A	330,000	-
The Palms Country Club	380,000	330,000
Country Club at Tagaytay Highlands	338,000	-
Tagaytay Highlands	650,000	620,000
Tagaytay Midlands	Pls. Call	620,000
The Country Club	2,000,000	-
Tower Club A/B*	150,000/180,000*	-
Valley Golf	218,000	-
Valle Verde Ind.	Pls. Call	-
Wack Wack Golf	Pls. Call	7,000,000

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CLUB	SELLER	BUYER
Alabang Country Club "A" (Filipino)	1,100,000	1,000,000
Alabang Country Club "B" (Foreigner)	-	1,100,000
Anvaya Cove Beach and Nature Club	Please Call	-
Baguio Country Club	565,000	540,000
Calatagan Golf Club "A"	40,000	-
Calatagan Golf Club "B"	60,000	50,000
Camp John Hay	-	300,000
Canlubang	550,000	425,000
Capitol Hills	40,000	-
Cebu Country Club	1,600,000	1,400,000
Celebrity Sports Club	120,000	100,000
Club Filipino	100,000	90,000
Eagleridge "A"/"B"/"C"	Please Call	-
Forest Hills "A"	100,000	-
Forest Hills "B"	150,000	-
Forest Hills "C"	200,000	-
Luisita Golf "A"	350,000	-
Makati Sports Club "A"	190,000	-
Makati Sports Club "B"	200,000	-
Manila Golf (Corporate)	-	12,500,000
Manila Golf (Individual)	-	11,600,000
Manila Polo	2,750,000	2,600,000
Manila Southwoods "A"	300,000	-
Manila Southwoods "B"	750,000	630,000
Manila Yacht Club	250,000	-
Mimosa (Individual)	230,000	200,000
Mimosa (Corporate)	600,000	550,000
Mt. Malarayat Gold "A"	180,000	-
Mt. Malarayat Gold "C"	350,000	-
Orchard Golf Club "A"	180,000	140,000
Orchard Golf Club "B"	310,000	-
Orchard Golf Club "C"	350,000	-
Quezon City Sports Club	150,000	125,000
Spa & Lodge	580,000	480,000
Sta. Elena "A"	1,500,000	1,300,000
Sta. Elena "B"	2,140,000	1,800,000
Sherwood "C"	-	160,000
Tagaytay Country Club	320,000	300,000
Tagaytay Highlands	-	630,000
Tagaytay Midlands	Please Call	620,000
Valle Verde (Individual)	90,000	-
Valley Golf	200,000	180,000
Wack-Wack Golf Club	-	7,000,000

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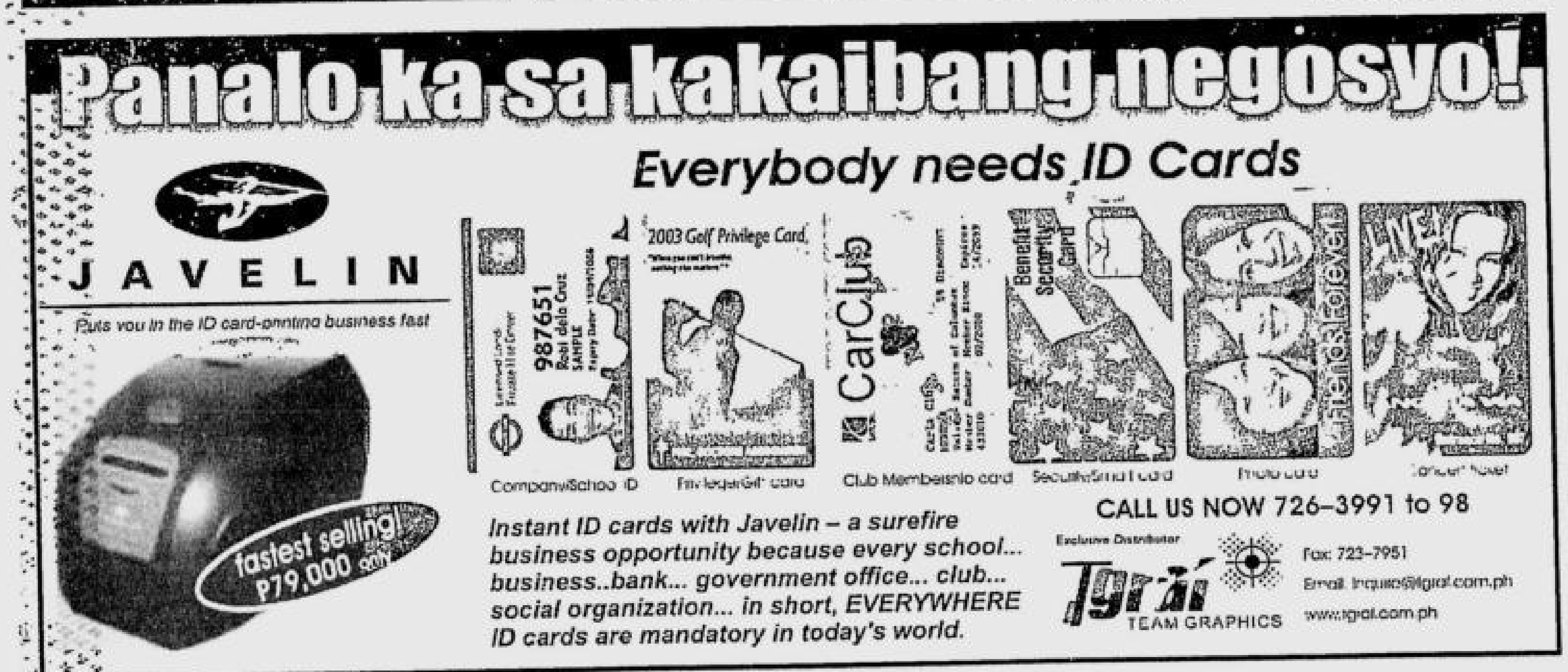

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of January 12, 2007)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	45	45	44.5	44.5	1,225,600
Bank of the Phil. Islands	66	67.5	66	67.5	1,451,300
China Banking Corp.	685	685	685	685	2,520
Chinatrust Comm. Bank	19	20	19	20	3,400
Citystate Savings Bank	19.25	19.25	19.25	19.25	400
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.46	0.47	0.46	0.47	5,680,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	80	80	80	80	71,600
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	52	53.5	52	53	3,143,400
Phil. Bank of Comm. A	50	50	50	50	1,000
Philippine National Bank	46	47	46	46	54,100
Phil. Savings Bank	48	48	48	48	2,100
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	29	30.5	29	29	914,700
Security Bank Corp.	67	67.5	66.5	67	394,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	48.5	49.5	48.5	49.5	75,200
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Bankard Inc.	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71	470,000
Citiseconline.Com Inc.	4.9	4.9	4.85	4.9	487,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	30.5	30.5	30.5	30.5	10,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1600	1605	1600	1605	140
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.4	1.44	1.4	1.44	286,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	292.5	292.5	290	290	6,500
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1970	2000	1970	2000	740
Ivantage Corp.	1.62	1.62	1.6	1.62	1,661,000
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
PNOC Energy Dev. Corp.	4.7	5	4.7	4.9	99,959,000
First Gen Corp.	53	53.5	53	53.5	1,168,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	69.5	73	69.5	73	1,154,500
Manila Electric Co. A	55.5	57.5	55.5	57	831,800
Manila Electric Co. B	56	58.5	55.5	58	1,123,700
Manila Water Co. Inc.	8.9	8.9	8.8	8.9	769,000
Petron Corp.	4.05	4.1	4.05	4.1	5,281,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	150,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.1	1.12	1.1	1.12	275,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.85	3.9	3.85	3.9	207,000
CADP Group Corp.	2	2	2	2	6,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	20.75	20.75	20.75	20.75	577,500
Jollibee Foods Corp.	42.5	43	42.5	43	135,800
RFM Corp.	1.16	1.2	1.16	1.2	482,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.7	3.1	2.7	3	2,659,000
San Miguel Corp. A	63.5	63.5	63	63.5	29,000
San Miguel Corp. B	75.5	76.5	75.5	76.5	682,500
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	14,000
Alliance Tuna Int'l, Inc.	2.1	2.1	2.04	2.04	1,890,000
Universal Robina Corp.	19.25	19.25	18.75	19	156,800
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.18	1.24	1.18	1.2	62,859,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.75	673,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	7.9	8.1	7.9	8	735,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	6	6	6	6	5,000
Republic Cement Corp.	4.2	4.35	4.2	4.35	655,000
Supercity Rlty Dev. Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	35,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc.	5.9	5.9	5.5	5.5	14,789,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	0.76	0.78	0.74	0.74	42,350,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.215	0.23	0.21	0.215	24,750,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Atok-Big Wedge Co. Inc.	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	3,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.01	0.01	0.0095	0.0095	127,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.011	0.011	0.01	0.01	28,000,000
Ayala Corp.	545	570	545	570	210,670
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	350,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	8.4	9	8.4	8.8	8,275,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	8.1	8.3	8.1	8.3	10,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.0725	0.0725	0.0675	0.0675	91,100,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.85	2.9	2.85	2.85	218,000
APC Group Inc.	0.41	0.41	0.39	0.39	5,520,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	686,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.06	1.06	1.04	1.04	1,448,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	30,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	1.14	1.16	1.14	1.16	180,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	33,200
Benpres Holdings Corp.	2.8	2.8	2.65	2.8	19,096,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	6.5	6.6	6.5	6.6	758,000
Fil-Estate Corp.	0.85	0.9	0.8	0.89	300,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	4.55	4.65	4.55	4.6	1,521,000
Global Business Hldgs Inc.	70	70	70	70	158,700
House Of Investments Inc.	2.1	2.1	2.08	2.08	346,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	11.5	11.75	11.5	11.5	971,800
Medco Holdings	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	200,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	4.7	4.8	4.6	4.65	889,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	1.9	1.96	1.88	1.88	4,193,000
Pacifica	0.022	0.022	0.021	0.021	128,200,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	1,290,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1	1	1	1	10,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.165	0.165	0.16	0.165	4,950,000
SM Investments Corp.	315	317.5	315	317.5	220,250
Seafront Resources Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	4,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.31	0.31	0.3	0.3	6,200,000
Vivant Corp.	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93	10,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	410,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	15.5	15.75	15.5	15.75	23,055,900
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	40,000
Belle Corp.	1.26	1.26	1.24	1.24	7,846,000
A Brown Co. Inc.	1.72	1.72	1.66	1.66	226,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.66	1.7	1.66	1.7	321,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	1,420,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	1,140,000
C&P Homes Inc.	1.46	1.68	1.46	1.6	1,997,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	1.86	1.86	1.86	1.86	15,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.32	0.32	0.31	0.31	1,040,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	570,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.64	0.64	0.62	0.63	19,910,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.58	1.68	1.58	1.64	441,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.0625	0.0625	0.06	0.06	3,000,000
Filinvest Land, Inc.	1.72	1.72	1.66	1.68	89,732,000
Gotesco Land Inc. B	0.13	0.13	0.12	0.13	1,510,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.56	0.59	0.55	0.55	45,540,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.87	0.95	0.85	0.87	39,230,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	500,000
Megaworld Corp.	2.42	2.44	2.36	2.44	61,320,000
Metro Pacific Inv. Corp.	5.4	5.4	5.3	5.3	258,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.37	0.37	0.35	0.37	870,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	540,000
Polar Property Holdings	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	10,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	15.25	15.5	15.25	15.5	11,136,400
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.71	0.71	0.69	0.69	9,250,000
SM Development Corp.	3.25	3.4	3.25	3.35	4,728,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	11.25	11.5	11.25	11.25	8,819,800
Suntrust Home Dev. Inc.	0.59	0.6	0.58	0.58	290,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	800,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	18.75	18.75	18.75	18.75	17,900
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	1	1	1	1	30,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	2	2.04	2	2.04	36,501,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1190	1195	1180	1180	56,440
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	6.4	6.5	6.4	6.5	5,085,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2405	2445	2405	2440	113,080
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.225	0.225	0.22	0.22	12,070,000
Imperial Res.	0.021	0.022	0.021	0.021	28,100,000
Ionics Inc.	2.5	2.65	2.5	2.6	2,187,000
IPVG Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.8	61,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.0525	0.0525	0.0525	0.0525	2,000,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.06	0.0625	0.06	0.0625	73,300,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.36	1.48	1.36	1.42	468,000
Transpacific Broadband	2.7	2.7	2.55	2.65	6,304,000
Philweb Corp.	0.033	0.034	0.033	0.034	33,100,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	4.05	4.05	4	4	331,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.82	1.88	1.82	1.82	254,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	24	25	23.75	25	1,890,500
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93	180,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	2.1	2.1	2.06	2.1	2,234,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.6	0.6	0.59	0.59	15,370,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.1	2.1	2.08	2.08	321,000
Paxys Inc.	19.25	19.5	19.25	19.25	573,500
Philcomsat Holdings Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	10,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	5.3	5.3	5.2	5.2	1,297,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	5.4	5.4	5.2	5.3	608,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.011	72,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	9	9	8.9	8.9	764,000
Benguet Corp. A	9.1	9.1	9	9	64,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.65	2.65	2.65	2.65	50,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.26	0.26	0.25	0.26	3,150,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	6,790,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.024	0.024	0.023	0.023	134,600,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.026	0.026	0.026	0.026	210,800,000
Omico Corp.	0.013	0.013	0.012	0.013	464,100,000
Philex Mining Corp.	3.75	3.8	3.75	3.75	2,362,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	16	16	15.75	16	166,900
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.7	0.71	0.69	0.69	810,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.42	1.48	1.42	1.46	3,891,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	4,300,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.012	49,700,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.013	0.013	0.012	0.012	6,600,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	1.08	1.12	1.08	1.08	2,244,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	1.12	1.14	1.1	1.12	776,000
PNOC Exploration Corp.-B	17.25	17.25	17.25	17.25	3,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	10	10.25	10	10.25	417,000

CURRENCIES

January 12, 2007 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.775314	1.000000	49.0000
Japan	Yen	0.006437	0.008302	0.4068
United Kingdom	Pound	1.508994	1.946300	95.3687
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.099430	0.128245	6.2840
Switzerland	Franc	0.620798	0.800705	39.2345
Canada	Dollar	0.658945	0.849907	41.6454
Singapore	Dollar	0.501756	0.647165	31.7111
Australia	Dollar	0.606045	0.781677	38.3022
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.056699	2.652731	129.9838
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.206751	0.266667	13.0667
Brunei	Dollar	0.500138	0.645078	31.6088
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000085	0.000110	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.021627	0.027894	1.3668
UAE	Dirham	0.211108	0.272287	13.3421
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.289800	63.2002
Korea	Won	0.000826	0.001065	0.0522
China	Yuan**	0.099464	0.128289	6.2862
Argentina	Peso	0.251930	0.324939	15.9220
Brazil	Real	0.361451	0.466200	22.8438
Denmark	Kroner	0.134184	0.173070	8.4804
India	Rupee	0.017427	0.022477	1.1014
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.220447	0.284333	13.9323
Mexico	New Peso	0.070419	0.090827	4.4505
New Zealand	Dollar	0.536586	0.692089	33.9124
South Africa	Rand	0.107384	0.138504	6.7867
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023684	0.030548	1.4969

Source: Reuters' forex closing prices as of NY Time—Jan. 11, 2007
* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters' Screen.
** Asian time closing rate as of Jan. 11, 2007

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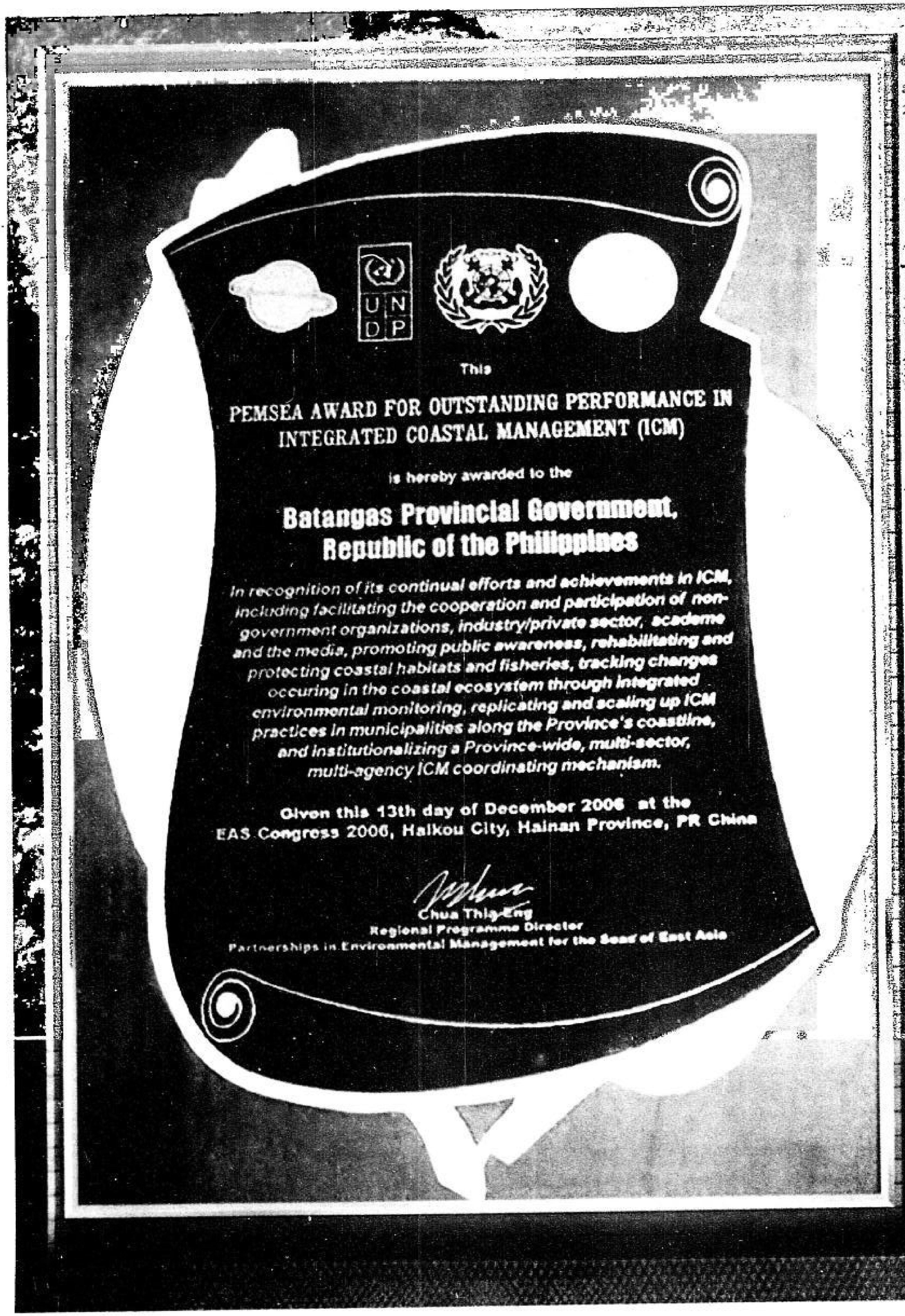
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Chua Thia-Eng
Regional Programme Director
Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia

Galing at talino ng Batangenyo kinilala ng buong mundo

Tumanggap ng pinakamataas na pandaigdigang parangal sa taong 2006 ang Lalawigan ng Batangas bilang pagkilala sa maayos na pamamahala ng mga sinasakupang dalampasigan nito. Ang parangal ay iginawad ng Partnership in Environmental Management (PEMSEA), sa pagtangkilik ng United Nations Development Programme, kasabay ng pagdaraos ng pandaigdigang kumperensiya ng organisasyon sa Hainan,Tsina noong ika-13 ng Disyembre 2006. Ang pagkilala sa Batangas ay sinaksihan ng mahigit 700 kalahok na kumakatawan sa iba't-ibang pamahalaan, ahensiya ng United Nations, NGO, industriya, at akademiya. Walang duda, ito ay pagkilala ng mundo sa galing at talino ng Batangenyo na nagpunyaging alagaan ang kaniyang dalampasigan.

Kgg Arman C. Sanchez
Gobernador
Lalawigan ng Batangas

Dangal ng Batangas

Rice producers seen to yield little in '07

Deadlock in Congress over national budget may take its toll on RP staple

By Christine A. Gaylican

RICE PRODUCTION IN THE COUNTRY could fall by the wayside if Congress were to fail in passing the 2007 budget needed by the Department of Agriculture and other line agencies of the government.

According to a ranking agriculture official, Philippine rice production in 2007 may only reach 16 million metric tons, or 5 percent higher than last year's yield, estimated at 15.3 million tons.

"We may not be able to set a higher production target for rice if we don't get a new budget," said Frisco Malabanan, the department's program director for rice.

The department's effort to boost production of rice—a major food staple in the country—is anchored largely on budgetary support from the government, Malabanan said.

The deadlock in Congress over the proposed 2007 national budget of P1.12 trillion has forced the agriculture department to consider operating on a reenacted budget of P15 billion, as against the P20 billion it seeks for 2007.

Malabanan said that this would affect the department's five-year program, beginning in 2006, to rehabilitate irrigation facilities covering 400,000 hectares of rice farms.

The program, which entails a budgetary requirement of P22 billion, is expected to help the country meet its goal of self-sufficiency in rice production by 2010.

Under the program, some of the farmlands will be devoted to high-yielding hybrid rice varieties. Malabanan explained that, in attaining self-sufficiency in producing rice, the country will no longer have to rely on imports, which amount to no less than P20 billion a year.

"Farmers in these areas would have two cropping seasons, and the additional output from these areas should be enough to cover our rice domestic requirements," he said.

A rapidly increasing Philippine population has also jacked up demand for the main staple to an average of 32,000 metric tons of rice a day.

The Philippines is a major rice importer in Asia. Last year, it bought 1.65 million tons, mostly from Vietnam.

The National Food Authority, the country's state-owned grains trading firm, is set to bring in this year some 1.72 million tons of rice to stabilize the country's supply requirements.

Pooled private funds for agri reform pushed

By Daxim L. Lucas

A NEW INVESTMENT SCHEME that will pool funds from real estate investors may be used to save the government's floundering agrarian reform program.

According to a report prepared by Cuervo Appraisers Inc., the introduction of real estate investment trusts (REITs) in the country is a viable alternative to the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) that will expire next year.

"The Agrarian REIT is a sensible alternative to the CARP Law," Cuervo Appraisers president Federico Cuervo said in his report. "After almost 20 years of the CARP Law, the results can be seen. CARP has served well as a social tool. It, however, failed miserably as an economic tool and will continue to be a convenient political tool for the popular vote."

A REIT is a tradable company and security that owns and leases out income-producing real estate such as apartments, offices, warehouses, hotels and shopping centers. It is structured in a way that allows small investors to make equity investment in large-scale income properties.

Under the proposed scheme, the Agrarian REIT will be patterned after similar instruments offered in Malaysia to circumvent Islamic banking restrictions.

According to Cuervo, a five-year transition period would be sufficient to restore value of an agricultural land. By allowing the sale of agricultural properties, there will be new opportunities for countryside investments, and capital flow needed for agricultural productivity will expand.

"A steady high-yielding cash flow should be an attractive option to further diversify the real estate portfolios of institutional and direct-equity investments," he said.

The government can then reserve the limited CARP fund to social services.

The property appraiser believes that the Agrarian REIT will make available funds to farmers, fishermen and migrant workers "to acquire a self-liquidating investment in a professionally managed agrarian-based property income stream."

Coco product's price abroad up over storm concerns

By Ronnel W. Domingo and Christine A. Gaylican

SOME 196,000 COCONUT FARMERS LOST about P714.4 million in damaged coconut trees due to Typhoon Reming that ravaged southern Luzon in late November 2006, according to the Philippine Coconut Authority.

PCA data show that some 42.64 million coconut trees were damaged, most of which were in the Bicol region—hardest hit by the super typhoon.

Also, exports of Philippine coconut oil last year fell by 6 percent to 1.07 million metric tons compared to the 1.14 million metric tons delivered in 2005.

"The reduction in exports was due in part to typhoon damage," according to the United Coconut Association of the Philippines.

Coconut plantations have been severely damaged by strong typhoons that pummeled the country during the last four months of 2006.

On the upside, UCAP said prices of desiccated coconut exports have risen further amid concerns over the effects of the typhoon on coconut output.

The PCA reported that 33.9 million, or 79.5 percent, of the affected trees were those in the Bicol region. This represents about a tenth of the country's 330 million coconut bearing trees.

The agency said P300 million was needed for replanting and rehabilitation of affected coconut farms.

As a result, Ucap said an increase in the price of desiccated coconut exports from the Philippines was observed following the aftermath of Typhoon Milenyo in September and Typhoon Paeng in October.

Desiccated or dehydrated coconut is used mainly in making cakes, desserts and other confections.

According to Ucap, the Europeans have quoted combined costs of cargo and freight for fine and medium grades of fair average quality at $1,130 a metric ton in November, rising 13 percent from the $1,000 per MT quoted the week before.

In the same period, European buyers favored Philippine supplies, as cargo and freight costs of from Indonesian shipments rose only 9 percent to $1,090 per MT, while those from Sri Lanka increased by a percent to $1,010 per MT.

Latest Ucap data show that exporters shipped out 9,160 MT of desiccated coconut in November, or an increase of 2.7 percent from 8,916 MT.

Further, the umbrella group said traders in Europe believed prices of desiccated coconut would remain firm even until the latter part of 2007.

"Tight coconut supplies and strong demand from coconut oil millers (in coconut producing countries), amid growing demand for desiccated coconut worldwide were cited as major factors fueling market firmness," it added.

NTC mulls free interconnection between carriers

By Riza T. Olchondra

THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS Commission (NTC) wants to impose free interconnection between carriers operating in the same province or local calling area and is calling for a public hearing to solicit comments on the matter.

Under the NTC's draft rules, a local calling area is "the province within which telecommunications services are furnished subscribers under specific scheduled rates and without toll charges."

The NTC said it made the draft rules in response to calls from several local exchange carriers (LECs) for intervention in interconnection talks.

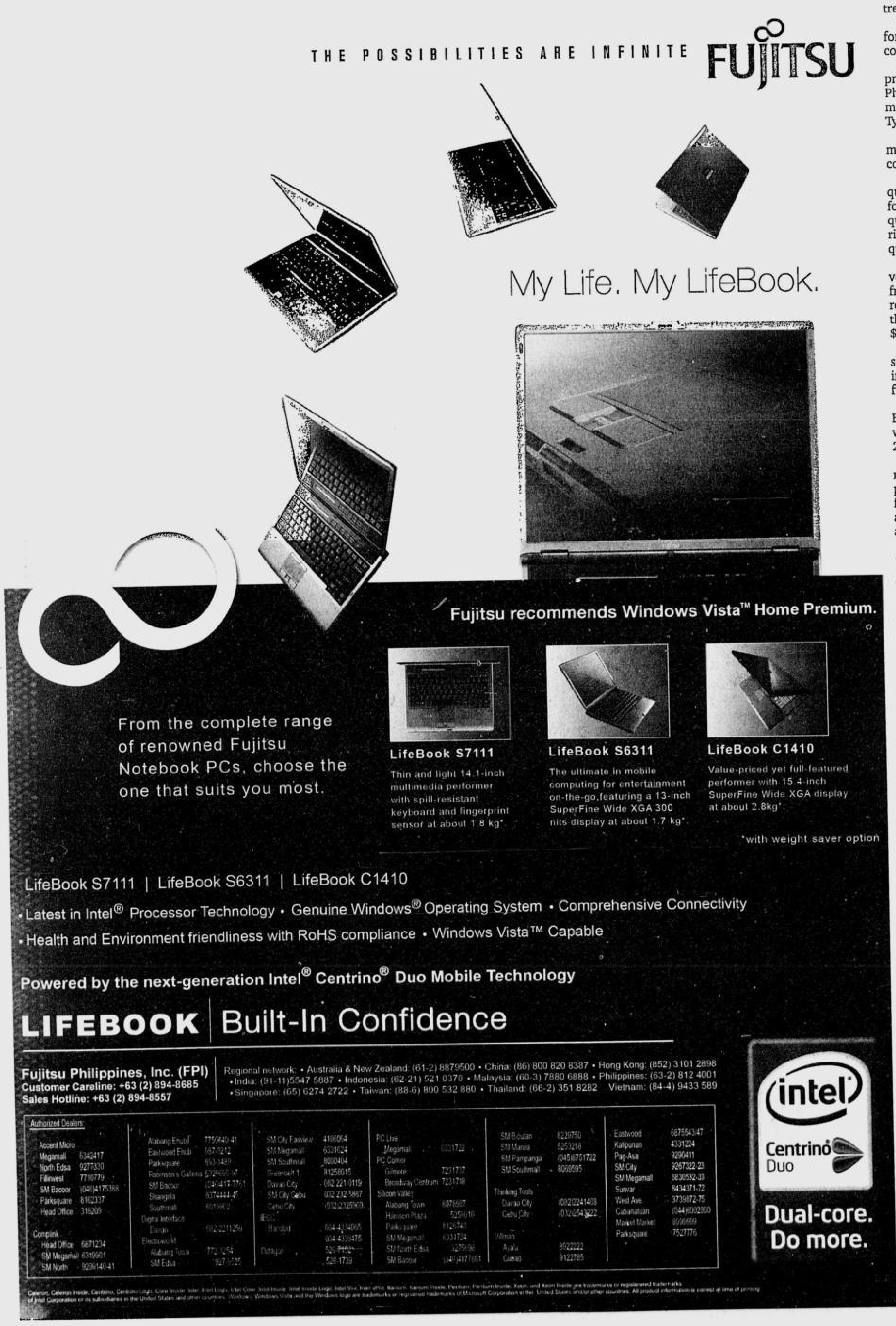
The commission said that, while local exchange networks are capital intensive, the costs per subscriber decreases as the number of users increase.

Subscribers of one LEC should be able to call someone using another LEC in the same area, and vice versa, said the NTC.

"If the interconnection requires the installation of radio facilities, each interconnecting LEC shall provide the required space and termination free of charge," the NTC said in its draft rules. "Each interconnecting LEC shall allow (entry), with at least 24-hour notice, of personnel from the other LEC for the sole purpose of repair and maintenance of radio facilities."

Should the NTC's proposed free interconnection push through, LECs that have not interconnected within one local calling area will be ordered to link up within 180 days from the effectivity of the final memorandum circular.

LECs may use the final circular as a basis for interconnection and may still negotiate better terms within 90 ninety days from the start of talks. After 90 days, the negotiating parties will have to adopt the terms stated in the circular.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SM Investments issuing $200M in 5-year bonds

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SM INVESTMENTS CORP. SAID IT WOULD issue $200 million worth of five-year convertible bonds to refinance a portion of $300 million in maturing debts this year.

Portion of the amount to be raised will be used as working capital of the company.

Refinancing entails replacing maturing debts with new debt at lower interest rates.

SMIC said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange that it had secured board approval for the $200-million corporate issuance. The issue date has yet to be disclosed.

The company appointed Citigroup and Macquarie Securities (Asia) Limited as joint lead managers for the issue.

It said the details of the terms and conditions of the convertible bonds will be discussed and finalized with the underwriters.

SMIC said it was issuing the bonds at a time when its shares were trading at their all-time highs. It closed at P317.50 on Friday.

The company has consolidated the assets and operations of SM Supermarkets and SM Hypermarkets, effectively doubling the revenue and income base of SM retail group.

At the close of 2006 the stockholders of Banco De Oro Universal Bank and Equitable PCI Bank approved the merger of the two banks. The merged entity will result in greater efficiencies due to economies of scale and wider market reach, SMIC said.

'07 trade gap seen declining to $8.4B

PALAWAN MINING OPERATIONS
Citinickel Mines and Development Corp. president Caroline L. Tanchay pays a courtesy call on Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes following the issuance of the firm's permit to mine nickel-cobalt sulfides in the municipalities of Narra and Espanola in southern Palawan.

Export growth goal raised to 16%

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COUNTRY IS EXPECTED TO POST A current account surplus of $4.9 billion in 2006 and $5.4 billion this year, with an improved export performance seen trimming the trade shortfall.

The latest forecasts made by the interagency Development Budget Coordination Committee showed that the trade deficit, as indicated in the country's balance of payments report, would narrow down to $8.4 billion this year from the projected $10.7 billion for 2006.

The current account, a component of the BOP, records the trade in goods and services and cash transfers. The BOP measures the total foreign exchange transactions between the domestic economy and the rest of the world.

The latest DBCC forecasts were an improvement from the outlook in November. The previous projections showed the 2006 current account surplus hitting only $3.8 billion, with the 2007 level seen going down to $3.5 billion.

For 2006, the DBCC jacked up its export growth forecast to 16 percent from the target of 12 percent set in November to reflect the sustained export growth in the first 10 months of the year, as recorded by the National Statistics Office.

"Even assuming a slowdown in exports in November and December, the resulting expansion in exports for the year would be about 16 percent," the DBCC report said.

"Major contributors to the additional export proceeds would be garments, mineral products—particularly copper metal and concentrates—and petroleum products," the report explained.

Given a higher base in 2006, the export growth forecast for 2007 was trimmed to 11 percent from 13 percent.

The DBCC noted that import growth in 2006 was within the 12 percent growth forecast. With the scaling down of the export forecast for 2006, which will translate to lower raw material purchases, and the softening of crude prices, the import growth target was also reduced to 12 percent from 14 percent.

Overseas Filipino workers' remittances were another major component of the current account and a major force behind the country's economic resilience.

Based on the latest assessment of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, OFW inflows could surge to a new high of $14.1 billion this year or 5 percent higher than the $13.4 billion seen to flow into the country in 2006.

Lack of infra support turns off investors

By Abigail L. Ho

THE LACK OF NECESSARY INfrastructure such as roads and airports is discouraging potential investors from investing in new hotels and resorts in the country, Philippine Travel Agencies Association president Jose Clemente III said.

"The problem is that investors don't want to invest due to lack of roads and airports," Clemente said. "Why spend so much to put up a hotel or a resort when tourists don't have any means to visit them?"

He said the Department of Tourism was already doing its part by guiding potential investors through the process of putting up business here—securing the necessary permits and getting perks from the Board of Investments.

"But this was not enough," he said, adding that the necessary infrastructure to bring tourists to various destinations here should be put in place.

PTAA ex-officio chair Marciano Ragaza added that this lack of infrastructure was also stunting the development of nontraditional tourist spots.

There are also places that have roads and other infrastructure support in place which have yet to be developed, he said.

"Nobody's stimulating development in the northern and southern Luzon," he said. "The Philippines is basically a beach destination, but development is mostly in the southern Philippines."

Other places that could still be further developed as world-class tourist spots are Bohol and Surigao, he said.

He said the passage of the pending Tourism Bill should aid in the development of these places, plus others that were barely on the radar of tourists.

This bill, he said, should give potential investors the impetus to invest in new hotels and resorts in popular tourist haunts, and even in "off-the-beaten-track" destinations.

"There are a lot of places that can be developed. The Tourism Bill will jumpstart tourism in other areas, not just Cebu, Boracay or Davao," he said.

He said the local tourism industry was currently in dire need of new rooms to accommodate all the tourists that were flocking to the country.

GOINGS-ON

RP's best managed firm

Ayala Corp. was named the Philippines' best managed large-capitalization company in Asiamoney's Annual Best Managed Companies Poll.

The poll was participated by more than 2,000 investors and analysts from leading fund-management firms, hedge fund companies and stock brokerage firms in the region.

Ayala was recognized for its leadership position in the real estate, banking, and telecommunications industries, as well as in electronics manufacturing, information technology, and water infrastructure management and development.

Marsman licensee

Marsman Drysdale Foods Corp. appointed Alternative Beverages Co. Inc. as a licensee for the manufacturing, marketing, distribution and selling of Drysdale ready-to-drink fruit juices. MDFC, for its part, will focus on its fresh mango and fruit puree business.

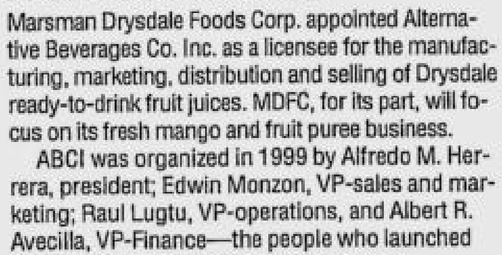
ABCI was organized in 1999 by Alfredo M. Herrera, president; Edwin Monzon, VP-sales and marketing; Raul Lugtu, VP-operations, and Albert R. Avecilla, VP-Finance—the people who launched Gatorade Thirst Quencher in the country.

Linking barangays

All 42,000 barangays nationwide will soon be connected through a text and Internet network under the Barangay Connectivity Program of Smart Communications, Liga ng mga Barangay sa Pilipinas and ONL Consultants.

Under the program, Smart will provide each barangay with four SIM cards for the use of the barangay captains and *kagawads*. The Barangay SIM cards will be loaded with a number of free text messages every month.

Smart will also provide Internet access to barangays through Smart Bro, the company's wireless broadband Internet service.



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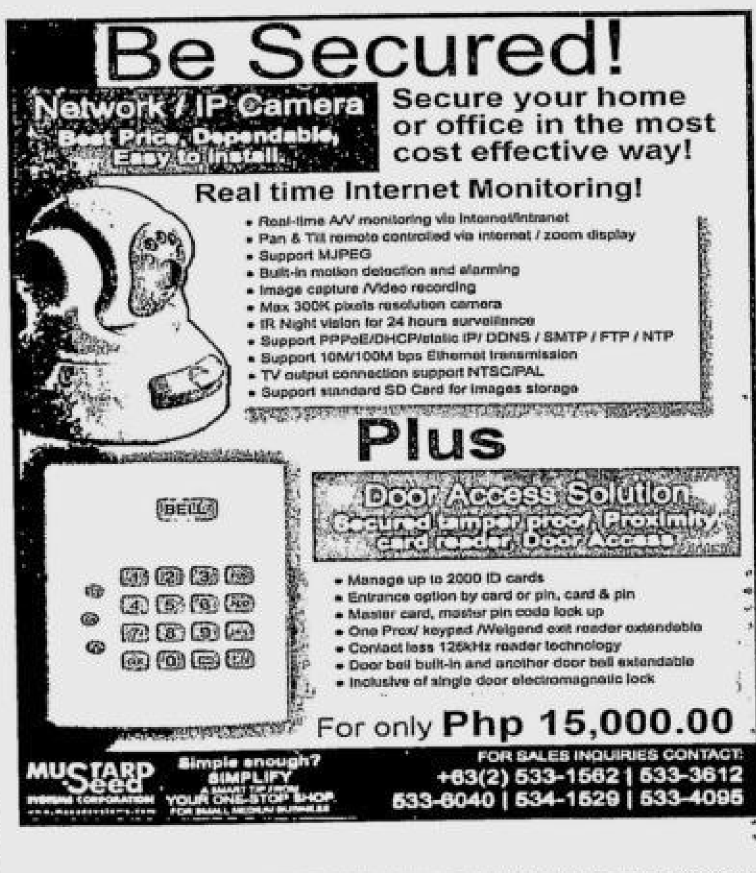

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COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
Diliman, Quezon City

Announces the Application Period and Admission Test Date for its

Ph.D. PROGRAM
in BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Application Period : January 2 – March 16, 2007
Admission Test Date : March 17, 2007 (Saturday) 7:30 a.m.

(Foreign applicants must take the GMAT and TOEFL)

Application materials/information may be secured from:

The Doctoral Office
College of Business Administration
University of the Philippines
Diliman, Quezon City 1101
PHILIPPINES
Telephone: 928-4571 to 76; Fax: 920-7990
e-mail: rosalinda@up.edu.ph

Republic of the Philippines
PHILIPPINE HEALTH INSURANCE CORPORATION
PhilHealth Regional Office IV-B
PSDC Bldg.,89 P. Burgos cor. Alegre Sts., Batangas City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Re-bidding of Multi-Year Contract for Lease of Office Space
ITB # PRO4B-06-018

The **PHILHEALTH REGIONAL OFFICE IV-B (PRO IV-B)** through the corporate operating budget of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation 2006 intends to apply the sum of *two million sixty six thousand four hundred pesos (P 2,066,400.00)* being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the multi-year contract for Lease of Office Space. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid Opening.

LOT	LEASE CONTRACT			Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)		Cost of Bid Documents
	Location	Square meters	Monthly Rental	2007 12 months	2008 12 months	
1	Warehouse/Stockroom (Batangas City)	100	10,000.00	120,000.00	132,000.00	300.00
2	PMAC Office (Batangas City)	170	35,000.00	420,000.00	462,000.00	900.00
3	Rosario Service Office (Rosario, Batangas)	110	12,000.00	144,000.00	158,400.00	300.00
4	Palawan Service Office (Puerto Princesa City, Palawan)	140	15,000.00	180,000.00	198,000.00	400.00
5	Or. Mdo. Service Office (Calapan City, Or. Mdo.)	120	10,000.00	120,000.00	132,000.00	300.00
Condition: Proposed contract price must not exceed the allotted monthly rental stated above.				Contract Duration: 2 years		

The **PRO IV-B** now invites Bids from eligible bidders for Lease of Office Space as presented above. These contracts shall take effect on ***March 1, 2007 to December 31, 2008***. The description of an eligible bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organization of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder of the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the PhilHealth Regional Office IV-B and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by Interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount presented above The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

The PRO IV-B will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on ***January 25, 2006, 10:00 a.m.*** at the 3rd floor, Conference Room, PhilHealth Regional Office IV-B.

Bids and Eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before **February 8, 2007, *9:00 a.m.*** Late bids will not be accepted. All bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in any of the following forms and amount.

FORM OF SECURITY	Minimum Amount in % of ABC to be Bid
1. Cash, certified check, cashier's check, manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit.	One percent (1%)
2. Bank Guarantee	One and a half percent (1 1/2%)

Bid opening shall be on **February 8, 2007, *10:00 a.m.*** at the 3rd Floor, Conference Room, PhilHealth Regional Office IV-B. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidder's representatives who choose to attend at the address below.

The PRO IV-B reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Rhonalyn Marasigan / Johnrey Iguiron (BAC Secretariat)
PhilHealth Regional Office IV-B
PSDC Bldg. #89 P. Burgos corner Alegre Sts., Batangas City
Tel. No. (043)723-8822 loc. 201
Facsimile No. (043)723-8822 loc. 409
e-mail address: regIon4b@philhealth.gov.ph

(Sgd) CIRILO C. BALMACEDA
Chairperson, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - Jan. 15, 2007)

PAMPANGA II ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
GUAGUA, PAMPANGA

January 12, 2007

INVITATION TO BID

PAMPANGA II ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. (PELCO II) WITH OFFICE ADDRESS AT SAN ROQUE, GUAGUA, PAMPANGA IS INVITING INTERESTED & ELIGIBLE BIDDERS FOR THE SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF CONCRETE AND STEEL POLES.

Specification:

Package I – ABC P24,866,070.00 (VAT Exclusive)

25 ft.	1000 pcs.
30 ft.	1000 pcs.
35 ft.	1000 pcs.
40 ft.	1000 pcs.

Package II – ABC P12,589,290.00 (VAT Exclusive)

25 ft., 112 mm butt, diameter, 90mm tip diameter 3000 pcs.

You are therefore invited to submit your bid/proposals to the PBAC and participate in a sealed bidding on January 23, (Tuesday), 11:00 A.M. at PELCO II Board room, San Roque, Guagua, Pampanga wherein sealed bids will be opened in your presence or your duly authorized representative. Late submission and/or incomplete bids/proposals or other related documents shall not be accepted.

REQUEST FURTHER TO INCLUDE IN YOUR SEALED BIDS/PROPOSALS THE FOLLOWING:

1. Bid Amount
2. Terms of Payment
3. Delivery Date
4. Validity Date
5. Bid Bond, any of the following:
   a. Cash or Manager's Check - 2.5% of the Total Gross Bid Price
   b. Surety Bond - 10% of the Total Gross Bid Price

Please be informed that non-attendance on the pre-bid conference, which shall be held on January 18, 2007 at 1:30 p.m. at Pelco II main office, San Roque, Guagua, Pampanga, is an outright disqualification for those bidders who would like to join the bidding. For non-accredited interested suppliers, the following requirements shall be submitted to the Committee and shall pay the Accreditation Fee of P1,000.00.

1. Company Profile
2. Latest ITR
3. Audited Financial Statement
4. Business or Mayor's Permit
5. DTI Registration
6. SEC Registration

Late bidders on the scheduled time of the bidding will be disqualified.

THE PBAC HAS THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS THAT DO NOT COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS, WAIVE ANY INFORMALITY IN THE PROPOSAL RECEIVED AND TO ACCEPT SUCH MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE COOPERATIVE.

(Sgd.) **ENGR. RAUL L. CANLAS**
PBAC Chairman

Noted by:

(Sgd.) **SULPICIO C. LAGARDE, JR.**
General Manager

(PDI – Jan. 14 & 15, 2007)

PAMPANGA II ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
GUAGUA, PAMPANGA

January 12, 2007

INVITATION TO BID

PAMPANGA II ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. (PELCO II) WITH OFFICE ADDRESS AT SAN ROQUE, GUAGUA, PAMPANGA IS INVITING INTERESTED & ELIGIBLE BIDDERS FOR THE SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF THE FOLLOWING ELECTRICAL MATERIALS:

Specification:

Package 1 – ABC P6,508,577.14 (Exclusive of VAT)

1. Polythelene AAC 1/0	–	74,000 meters
2. Polythelene AAC #6	–	68,000 meters
3. TW # 8 Copper	–	48,000 meters
4. Duplex wire # 6	–	60,000 meters

Brand – preferably Unicon, Phillex, Delco

Package II – ABC P4,727,678.57 (Exclusive of VAT)

Compression Connectors:

YHO 150	-	115,000 pcs.
YHO 200	-	115,000 pcs.
YPC	-	110,000 pcs.

Package III – ABC P 2,274,883.93 (Exclusive of VAT)

1. Electrical tape	–	19,000 pcs.
2. Swinging Clevis Service	–	19,000 pcs.
3. Spool Insulator 1 3/8 x 1 3/8	–	19,000 pcs.
4. Eye Nut 5/8"	–	17,000 pcs.
5. Meter base round	–	1,500 pcs.
6. Stove Bolt 3/16" x 1"	–	29,000 pcs.

You are therefore invited to submit your bid/proposal to the PBAC and participate in a sealed bidding on January 23, (Tuesday), 11:00 A.M. at PELCO II Board Room, San Roque, Guagua, Pampanga wherein sealed bids will be opened in your presence or your duly authorized representative. Late submission and/or incomplete bids/proposals or other related documents shall not be accepted.

REQUEST FURTHER TO INCLUDE IN YOUR SEALED BIDS/PROPOSALS THE FOLLOWING:

1. Bid Amount
2. Terms of Payment
3. Delivery Date
4. Validity Date
5. Bid Bond, any of the following:
   a. Cash or Manager's Check – 2.5% of the Total Gross Bid Price
   b. Surety Bond – 10% of the Total Gross Bid Price

Please be informed that non-attendance on the pre-bid conference which shall be held on January 18, 2007 at 1:30 p.m. at Pelco II main office, San Roque, Guagua, Pampanga, is an outright disqualification for those bidders who would like to join the bidding. For non-accredited interested suppliers, the following requirements shall be submitted to the Committee and shall pay the Accreditation Fee of P1,000.00

1. Company Profile
2. Latest ITR
3. Audited Financial Statement
4. Business or Mayor's Permit
5. DTI Registration
6. SEC Registration

Late bidders on the scheduled time of the bidding will be disqualified.
THE PBAC HAS THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS THAT DO NOT COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS, WAIVE ANY INFORMALITY IN THE PROPOSAL RECEIVED AND TO ACCEPT SUCH MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE COOPERATIVE.

(Sgd.) **ENGR. RAUL L. CANLAS**
PBAC Chairman

Noted by:

(Sgd.) **SULPICIO C. LAGARDE, JR.**
General Manager

(PDI – Jan. 14 & 15, 2007)

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Surigao del Norte
MUNICIPALITY OF CLAVER
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
oOo

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Municipality of Claver, Surigao del Norte, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites contractors registered with and classified by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for Eligibility and if found eligible, to bid for the hereunder Contract:

Name of the Contract : Construction of Municipal Commercial Center
Location : Barangay Tayaga, Claver, Surigao del Norte
Brief Description : Construction of 46 units Dry Market Stalls w/o Doors, CHB Drainage Canal & Tile Works
Approved Budget for the Contract : P11,854,334.85
Source of Fund : Land Bank of the Philippines Loan Proceeds
Equipment Needed : 1 unit One Bagger Concrete Mixer, 1-unit Concrete Vibrator, 1-Unit Bar Cutter, 1-unit Pay Loader, 1-unit Dump truck, 2-Units Welding machine and 1-set Oxygen & LPG cutting outfit
Technical Personnel Requirements : 1-Project Engineer, 1 Construction Foreman
Contract Duration : 330 Calendar days

Prospective bidder should possess a valid PCAB License applicable to the contract, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least 50% of the ABC, and have key personnel and equipment available for the prosecution of the contract The BAC will use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria in the Eligibility Check/ Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids. The BAC will conduct post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provision of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The schedule of BAC activities is as follows:

	BAC Activities	Schedule
1.	Receipt from prospective bidders of Letters of Intent (LOI) including Application for Eligibility	Jan. 22, 2007
2.	Issuance of Eligibility Forms	Jan. 22, 2007
3.	Receipt of Eligibility Requirements	Jan. 25, 2007
4.	Eligibility Check	Jan. 25, 2007
5.	Notice of Results of Eligibility Check	Jan. 29, 2007
6.	Issuance of Bid Documents	Jan. 31, 2007
7.	Pre-Bid Conference	Jan. 31, 2007
8.	Receipt and Opening of Bids	Feb. 15, 2007
9.	Bid Evaluation	Feb. 19, 2007
10.	Post-Qualifications	Feb. 21, 2007
11.	Notice of Awards	Feb. 26, 2007

The BAC will issue to prospective bidders Eligibility Forms at BAC Secretariat Municipal Hall, Claver, Surigao del Norte, upon submission of LOI, and upon payment of non-refundable amount of P750.00 to the Municipal Treasury Office. Prospective bidders shall submit the eligibility requirements and may obtain results of the Eligibility Check to the BAC Secretariat at the same address.

The BAC will issue Bidding Documents only to bidders declared by the BAC as eligible for the bidding upon payment of a non-refundable amount of P12,000.00 to the Municipal Treasury Office.

The Local Government Unit of Claver and the BAC members assume no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify for any expenses incurred in the preparation of bids.

APPROVED BY:
(Sgd.) **EMILIA B. ELPA**
BAC Chairman

(PDI – January 8 & 15, 2007)

Zamboanga City Electric Cooperative, Inc.
(ZAMCELCO)
Zamboanga City

INVITATION TO BID

The Zamboanga City Electric Cooperative, Inc. (ZAMCELCO) at Putik, this city or requisite under Board Policies on Pre-Qualifications, and Bids and Awards, invites ALL interested Bidders/ Suppliers to bid for the supply of the following electrical materials/equipment/items, to wit:

No.	Quantity	Unit	Item Description
1		6 UNITS	CURRENT TRANSFORMER (CT) PRIMARY Note MULTI-RATIO @400-300-200/5 AMPS BRAND: WTW, STROM WANDLER, MADE IN GERMANY
2		6 UNITS	POTENTIAL TRANSFORMER (PT) PRIMARY BIL 95KV Note: RATED VOLTAGE 15KV, PTR 8,400/120, DOUBLE BUSHING OUTDOOR TYPE, BRAND: WTW, STROM WANDLER MADE IN GERMANY

You may secure the Pre-qualification Requirements from the office of the Finance Department, ZAMCELCO Complex in Putik, this city anytime during office hours and submit the same upon completion of all requirements thereof.

Submission of the Pre-qualification Requirements shall not be later than 5:00 pm January 18, 2007 and no documents appertaining thereto, shall be accepted thereafter.

All applicants will be duly notified as to the results of the pre-qualification eligibility process. Only those who are pre-qualified will be allowed to participate in the bidding.

Bidding will be conducted on **January 25, 2007.**

Sealed bid in duplicate copies should be submitted to the Committee on Bids and Awards at the Office of the Finance Department at the above-mentioned address on or before 2:00 p.m. of **January 25, 2007. Five percent (5%) Bidder's Bond** is required as a matter of policy

The right to reject any or all bids, to waive any formality therein, or to accept such bid as my be considered advantageous to the coop is hereby reserved an absolute prerogative of ZAMCELCO.

(Sgd.) **REINERIO R. RAMOS**
General Manager

(PDI – Jan. 15, 2007)

PHILIPPINE RECLAMATION AUTHORITY
(Public Estates Authority)

INVITATION TO BID FOR THE SALE OF UNSERVICEABLE VEHICLES

The Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) is offering for sale, on an "as-is, where-is" basis, the following Unserviceable Vehicles:

1. Items for Sale

Item No.	Item Description and Location	Minimum Bid Price
1	1995 Mitsubishi L-200 D/Cab, Pick-up Diesel, Black	P 114,975.00
2	1993 Toyota Corona 2.0 4-door Sedan, Gas, Silver	90,480.00
3	1993 Toyota Corona 2.0 4-door Sedan, Gas, Gray	87,145.00
4	1992 Toyota Tamaraw FX HSPUR, Gas, Blue	47,125.00
5	1995 Toyota Tamaraw FX Wagon, Gas, Blue	43,746.00
6	1991 Toyota Lite Ace Commuter, Gas, White	36,226.00
7	1990 Kia Ceres 4 x 2 HSPUR Diesel, Red	52,700.00
8	1993 Honda Motorcycle 125cc Gas, Red	3,800.00
9	One (1) Lot Junk Unserviceable Motor Vehicles	39,000.00 /lot

2. Interested parties may obtain the Terms and Condition and Bid Documents upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Two Hundred Pesos (P200.00) starting January 16 to February 8, 2007 from 9:00 AM to 5:00PM at the Administrative Department, 7th Floor Legaspi Towers 200, Paseo de Roxas, Makati, MM.
3. The first pre-bid conference is scheduled on January 25, 2007 at 2:00PM at the PRA Conference Room.
4. Duly accomplished Bid Documents prescribed in the Terms and Conditions shall be submitted to the PRA Real Estates Bids and Awards Committee (PREBAC) on February 9, 2007 on or before 1:30PM. Public opening of bids shall follow at 2:00 PM of the same day.
5. PRA reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any informality found therein, and to accept such bids as may be considered most advantageous to its interest, without any obligation on the part of PRA to explain the reasons thereof.
6. In the event that the public bidding becomes a failure, the PRA reserves the right to accept proposals for the above items for sale.
7. For inquiries, please contact Engr. Danilo Almoite or Ms. Lilian Tabinga at telephone number 817-47-11 local 174.

MANUEL G. FRANCISCO
Chairman- PREBAC

(PDI–Jan. 13, 14 & 15, 2007)

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Notice is hereby given to the public that Ms. **Sonia Leaño** of **Catmon St., Magsaysay Ave., Balatas, Naga City,** whose picture appears above, is no longer connected with **Bicol Broadcasting Inc.** since December 27, 2006.

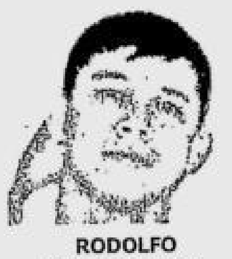
Any tránsacation entered into by this person on or after the said date shall not be honored by the Company.

The Management
Bicol Broadcasting Inc.
Unit 2401, 139 Corporate Center,
Valero St., Salcedo Village,
Makati City

(PDI - Jan. 15, 2007)

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

ALLAN MALLARI DE LEON
Criminal Case
No. Q-06-139326



RODOLFO DAYUNDON JR.
Criminal Case
No. 22592

ANA LYDIA TERRANO GADIAN
Criminal Case
No. C-129-06-2001

QUALIFIED THEFT

Please be informed that a warrant of arrest has been issued against these persons

For any informations on their whereabouts, please call

897-7806 / 896-8325 / 897-7803

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(PDI – Jan. 15, 21 & 29, 2007)

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Zamboanga City Water District Page A31

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Republic of the Philippines
Department of Health
DR. JOSE FABELLA MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
Manila

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Dr. Jose Fabella Memorial Hospital invites interested bidders for the bidding of the following hospital equipment:

A. Medical / Office Equipment

1. Hospital Beds Stainless, (50 units) P 17,000.00/unit	16. Ventilator, w/o compressor, Neonate (3 units) P 320,000.00/unit
2. Mechanical Bed, w/ mattress (20 units) 40,000.00/unit	17. Ventilator, w/o compressor, Adult (2 units) 700,000.00/unit
3. Mattress, Adult (146 units) 2,499.00/unit	18. Aircon, 5 tons, including installation (4 units) 160,000.00/unit
4. Syringe Pump (2 units) 70,000.00/unit	19. Fire Extinguishers (40 units) 9,050.00/unit
5. Infusion Pump (2 units) 85,000.00/unit	20. Copier Machine, HD (10 units) 127,500.00/unit
6. BP Apparatus (15 units) 12,000.00/unit	21. Electrocautery, Adult (1 unit) 280,000.00
7. IV Trainer (Arm) (4 units) 45,000.00/unit	22. Bassinet w/ mattress (50 units) 6,100.00/unit
8. Examining Table (5 units) 18,400.00/unit	23. Generator Set (1 unit) 497,000.00
9. Blood Pump, elect. (4 units) 105,000.00/unit	24. Ultrasound Machine (1 unit) 1,300,000.00
10. Ultrasound Machine w/ Color Doppler, 4 probes (1 unit) 6,000,000.00	25. Fetal Monitor (2 units) 250,000.00/unit
11. Refrigerated Centrifuge (1 unit) 2,300,000.00	26. Incubator (4 units) 300,000.00/unit
12. Freezing Microtome (1 unit) 1,700,000.00	27. Oxygen Manifold (2 units) 185,000.00/unit
13. Copy Printer (1 unit) 259,000.00	28. Mobile X-ray (1 unit) 1,800,000.00
14. Pulse Oximeter (4 units) 75,000.00/unit	29. Radiant Warmer (2 units) 351,500.00/unit
15. Sterilizer, autoclave (1 unit) 650,000.00	30. Paging System, including installation (1 unit) 200,000.00
	31. Electrical Wiring, including installation (1 lot) 1,300,000.00

B. Equipment Rental	ABC
Chemistry Analyzer	4,200,000.00/year
Immunology Machine	4,704,000.00/year
Hematology Analyzer	4,560,400.00/year
Blood Gas Analyzer	1,140,000.00/year

Schedule of Activities:

	Pre-Bid Conference	Bid Opening
A. Medical/Office Equipment	January 23, 2007, 2:00 p.m. Reception Hall	February 6, 2007, 1:30 p.m. Reception Hall
B. Equipment Rental	January 24, 2007 2:00 p.m. Reception Hall	February 8, 2007 1:30 p.m. Reception Hall

Bid documents may be secured at the BAC Secretariat, Administrative Office. For details, please contact telephone no. 735-7144.

The DJFMH reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any formality found therein and to accept such bids as may be considered advantageous to the government.

The DJFMH-BAC assumes no obligation to compensate or indemnify the bidders for any expenses or losses that may be incurred in the preparation of bids nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

(Sgd.) ELISEA S. MARQUEZ, M.D., D.P.B.A.
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(PDI – Jan. 8 & 15, 2007)

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BULLETIN OF VACANT POSITIONS

In Compliance with RA 7041

A. **Field Investigation Office (To be assigned to Office of Legal Affairs)**
Graft Investigation and Prosecution Officer I – Item Nos. OMBA-GIO1-2-2004 and OMBA-GIO1-3-2004 (2 Positions)

B. **General Investigation Bureau – C (To be assigned to Office of Legal Affairs)**
Graft Investigation and Prosecution Officer I – Item No. OMBA-GIO1-6-2004

C. **Assets Investigation Bureau (To be assigned to Office of Legal Affairs)**
Graft Investigation and Prosecution Officer I – Item No. OMBA-GIO1-36-2003

D. **Intelligence Bureau (To be assigned to Office of Legal Affairs)**
Graft Investigation and Prosecution Officer I – Item No. OMBA-GIO1-53-1998

Education: Bachelor of Laws; Experience: Three (3) years of experience in the practice of law, counseling, investigation/prosecution of cases, hearings of administrative/criminal cases, legal research or other related works; Training: 24 hours of relevant training; eligibility: RA 1080 (BAR)

Applicants should submit within ten (10) calendar days from the date of this publication to the Human Resource Management Division at the above address, the following requirements:

1) A letter stating the position applied for;
2) Duly accomplished Personal Data Sheet (CSC Form 212);
3) 1" x 1" picture (colored)
4) * Bar/Board Rating or CSC Certificate of Eligibility;
5) * Transcript of Records;
6) * Certificates of Seminars/Training attended;
7) * Service Records or Certificates from previous/present employers stating the positions assumed and corresponding actual duties and responsibilities (if applicable)
8) * Performance Appraisal Reports for the last two rating periods (for current government employees only);
9) Statement duly signed by the applicant as to any relative(s) within the fourth degree of consanguinity or affinity, currently employed with the Office of the Ombudsman.

* Where photocopies are filed, the documents must be certified as true copies by the proper authorities or the applicant may present the originals to the Human Resource Management Officer for comparison with the photocopies.

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Finance
Securities and Exchange Commission
SEC Bldg., EDSA, Greenhills, Mandaluyong City
CORPORATION FINANCE DEPARTMENT

OPTIMA BALANCED FUND, INC. : Registration of Securities
–Registrant– :
x- -x

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that on November 15, 2006, a Registration Statement was filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission for and on behalf of OPTIMA BALANCED FUND, INC. for the registration of Two Hundred Million (200,000,000) common shares with the par value of One Peso (P1.00) each for an aggregate value of Two Hundred Million Pesos (P200,000,000.00), representing its entire authorized capital stock.

According to the papers/documents presented, the following persons are the directors/officers of the corporation.

NAME	POSITION
Jose Alberto T. Alba	Chairman of the Board/Director
Raymund P. Navarro	President/Director
Jose L. Santos	Director
Francisco A. Alba	Director
Antonio P. Gatmaitan	Director
Paul Joseph M. Garcia	Independent Director
Francisco T. Alba Jr	Director
Lyndon L. Lukban	Treasurer
Atty. Celenno A. Palino	Corporate Secretary

Said Registration Statement and other papers/documents attached thereto are open to inspection by interested parties during business hours and copies thereof, photostatic or otherwise, shall be furnished to every party at such reasonable fees as the Commission may prescribe.

(Sgd.) JUSTINA F. CALLANGAN
Director

(PDI–Jan. 8 & 15, 2007)

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As human beings age, bones go through a constant state of breaking down and rebuilding. This is called remodeling. In every stage of life, the bone remodeling process changes depending on age, gender, and hormonal status.

The childhood to adolescence stages are the critical years for building bone mass. This is when bone formation activities are more likely to take place rather than bone breakdown.

As men and women progress to adulthood (25 to 45 years old), bone activities are at an equilibrium wherein bone formation and bone breakdown occur almost at the same rate. Bone mass is at its peak. Even at this stage, bone development continues as the cells repair fractures and remodels to meet changing lifestyles.

Upon entering our mature years (45 years old and up), people slowly experience bone loss that weakens the body. Thus, bones become more prone to breakdown which can be fatal to one's health.

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Like any organ in the body, bones also need to be nourished. Regular exercise strengthens not only the muscles but also the bones. Daily walking and stair climbing exercises are beneficial to the bones. Others try to avoid some form of physical activity for fear of breaking the bones. What they don't know is that inactivity can further lead to bone loss.

Always observe proper body posture when standing, sitting and even walking. Regularly go to the doctor for a check-up on your health, particularly your bone health. Seek your doctor's advice on the proper exercise and food that you should take.

Eat the right kinds of food that are rich in calcium, vitamin D and minerals. Live your day healthily with a glass or two of Nesvita Pro-Bone Protection to keep your bones fit and strong.

CA JUSTICE TAKES OATH OF OFFICE

Court of Appeals Justice Francisco P. Acosta took his oath of office before Supreme Court Justice Dante O. Tinga Dec. 16. Shown are (from left) Court of Appeals Justice Stephen C. Cruz, Justice Dante O. Tinga, Justice Francisco P. Acosta, lawyer Teodorico P. Fernandez, and Court of Appeals Justice Lucenito N. Tagle.

Philfoodex marks 20th year with food expo

THE PHILIPPINE FOOD PROCESSORS AND Exporters' Organization (Philfoodex), the country's biggest umbrella organization of local food processors and exporters, celebrates its 20th anniversary with the Sixth Philippine Food Expo from Feb. 1 to 4 at the Megatrade Hall of the SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City.

The 6th Philippine Food Expo will be the ultimate showcase of the best of Filipino food products from all over the country.

Together with the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Science and Technology, the Department of Trade & Industry-Citem and the Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc (Philexport), Philfoodex will showcase Filipino ingenuity, resourcefulness and creativity to further boost the growth of the food sector.

This four-day event provides the local food sector the opportunity not only to generate sales, but to provide opportunities for networking.

Expo participants include food processors, fresh and processed fruits, fresh and processed seafood, snack food and confectionery, herbal/organic food, food equipment and packaging.

For inquiries on how to take part in the Food Expo, call 687-0654 or 687-3292, e-mail cut@pldtdsl.net or log on to www.philfoodex.org.

Int'l liver conference begins today

WITH ITS THEME "UPDATES AND CONTROversies in Common Liver Diseases," the St. Luke's Center for Liver Diseases will be holding the 1st St. Luke's International Liver Conference on Jan. 15 and 16 at the Garden Ballroom of the Edsa Shangri-la Hotel. The conference will highlight issues regarding management of liver diseases such as Chronic Hepatitis B and C, Liver Cirrhosis, and Hepatocellular Carcinoma, with world-renowned, top-level clinicians and researchers in the field of hepatitis, liver transplantation and hepatocellular carcinoma presiding over the scientific sessions and discussions.

Liver disease remains to be a leading cause of death in the Philippines and in the world. Late diagnosis and the absence of obvious symptoms lessen the patient's chances of survival. Global estimates of annual deaths due to hepatocellular carcinoma alone range between 300,000 to 1 million, making primary liver disease the fourth or fifth leading cause of cancer death. Early detection remains to be the key to fighting this deadly disease. With the recent advancements in diagnosis and treatment modalities, people with liver disease have new hope.

With the opening of the St. Luke's Center for Liver Diseases, this renewed hope was made available in the country. Inspired by some of the best liver centers in the world, the Center is the country's first and only liver center, offering state-of-the-art, comprehensive and multi-disciplinary programs focusing on clinical patient care, the only liver data bank-based liver research, and public as well as healthcare professional educational programs that target the major regions of the country. The Center for Liver Diseases is also the first facility in the Philippines offering Radio Frequency Ablation (RFA) in the treatment of metastatic and primary liver cancer. In January 2003, its team of hepatology experts and other specialties successfully performed the first RFA of primary liver cancer in the country and its current data show a 61-percent survival in three years compared to 20-percent survival in six to eight months without treatment.

The conference features a roster of distinguished foreign speakers that include Dr. Samuel D. Bernal (UCLA and Sepulveda VA Medical Center); Dr. Yuman Fong (Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center); Dr. Robert G. Gish (California Pacific Medical Center); Dr. Patrick S. Kamath (Mayo Clinic); Dr. Ching Lung Lai (University of Hong Kong); Dr. Willis C. Maddrey (University of Texas); Dr. Teerha Piratvisuth (Prince of Songkla University, Thailand); and Dr. Solkho W. Schalm (Erasmus MC University Medical Center, Netherlands).

The St. Luke's Center for Liver Diseases headed by Dr. Juliet Gopez-Cervantes invites all healthcare professionals who are interested in liver diseases to attend this international conference and learn from the world's top hepatology experts. For more information, call 723-0101 ext. 4220 or 4221.

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Experts see good year ahead despite risks

Peso, elections top investor concerns

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

INVESTMENT HOUSE FIRST METRO Investments Corp. and the University of Asia and the Pacific expect a good year ahead for the economy but cautioned that risks remain.

In its study published in December, FMIC and the UA&P said the country's favorable economic "fundamentals"—improving inflation rate, stronger foreign exchange, moderate gross domestic product growth and an "impressive" fiscal sector performance—would carry through in 2007, particularly in the first quarter.

Inflation, which measures the increase in the prices of goods and services, was expected to dip to below 4 percent this month and further down to 3 percent in February.

"Stable to softer oil prices should further support the downward trend in Philippine inflation rates, which had been pushed up in the last three years by spiraling crude oil prices and the additional 2 percent value added taxes," FMIC and UA&P said.

FMIC and UA&P said, however, that the peso was likely to return to 50 to a dollar by the second quarter this year as remittances from overseas Filipino workers have reached their peak.

"These inflows slow down starting January, and we expect the balance of trade to worsen in early 2007," the study noted.

Gross domestic product, or the sum of goods and services produced in the country, on the other hand, was expected to grow by 6 percent this year due to increased infrastructure spending and robust activity in the real estate sector.

Politics poses the biggest risk to these bullish growth numbers, the study said.

"If administration legislators do not get a sizeable majority, the President runs the risk of yet another impeachment effort," it said.

FMIC and UA&P said the elections should keep a cloud of uncertainty over the continuity of the fiscal gains achieved by the government, at least until May 2007.

"The failure of Congress led by an unfriendly Senate to pass the 2007 budget before Christmas drives home the point that politics may ruin an otherwise promising outlook," the study noted.

Meantime, FMIC executive vice president Roberto Dispo said a low interest rate scenario would also encourage the private sector to raise new capital through debt offers.

The capital market was also expected to remain vibrant this year as banks raise more capital to comply with new financial requirements.

Fund raising at the capital market was seen to top P300 billion this year for both government and private sector borrowings and offerings, from P270 billion last year, Dispo said.

BIR excise tax take down 10% as of Nov. '06

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE'S Excise tax collection as of November last year dropped 10 percent due to the lower tax tax from sales of alcoholic beverages and petroleum products.

The BIR collected P51.92 billion worth of excise tax in the 11 months to November last year compared with P57.85 billion recorded in the same period in 2005.

The excise tax collection as of November last year also fell short of the P52.9-billion target for the period.

Excise tax is levied on petroleum and so-called "sin" products, including alcohol and tobacco.

The tax is imposed to supposedly discourage excessive consumption of the covered products.

Data from the BIR showed that of the total excise tax collected in the first 11 months of last year, those collected from alcohol manufacturers reached only P14.56 billion, a drop of 6.8 percent from the previous year's P15.63 billion, and short of the target by 8.67 percent.

Revenue authorities said they were about to conduct a study on the reasons behind the shortfall in the collection of excise tax on alcohol, but they surmised it had to do with the drop in demand for alcoholic beverages following the implementation of the sin tax hike starting 2005.

Of the total, excise tax collected from petroleum products reached only P11.265 billion compared with the previous year's 17.69 billion, for a decline of 36 percent.

The collection, however, was 4 percent higher than the P10.83-billion target.

The year-on-year drop in the collection on excise tax on petroleum products was attributed to the cut in the tax rates.

The government slashed the excise tax rates on petroleum products to mitigate the effect of the value-added tax on oil.

The VAT Reform Law (RVAT) expanded the coverage of the value-added tax to include previously exempted oil and other products. Excise tax collected from mineral products, on the other hand, reached P430.54 million, 73-percent higher than the previous year's P248.57 million.

This reflected a rise in production of mineral products amid efforts to boost the mining industry.

Lastly, excise tax collected from miscellaneous products and tobacco inspection fees reached a combined P1.71 billion.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves earlier expressed his intention for the government to study the possibility of further increasing excise tax rates.

He noted that despite the sin tax hike in 2005, excise tax rates in the Philippines were still among the lowest in the region.

But Teves said the proposed legislative measures that the Department of Finance would push in Congress this year were still up for discussion among fiscal authorities.

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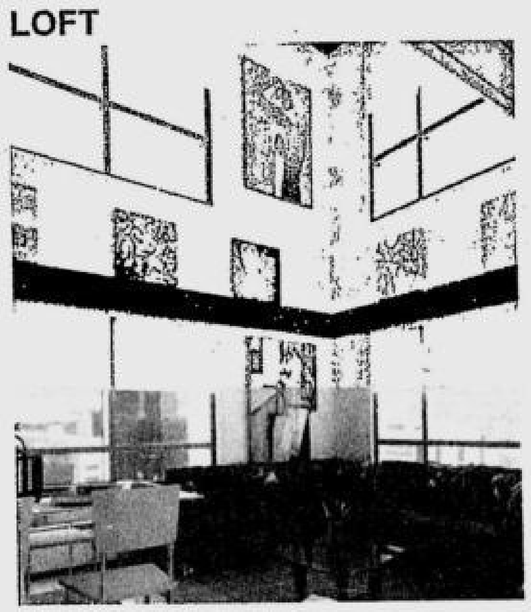

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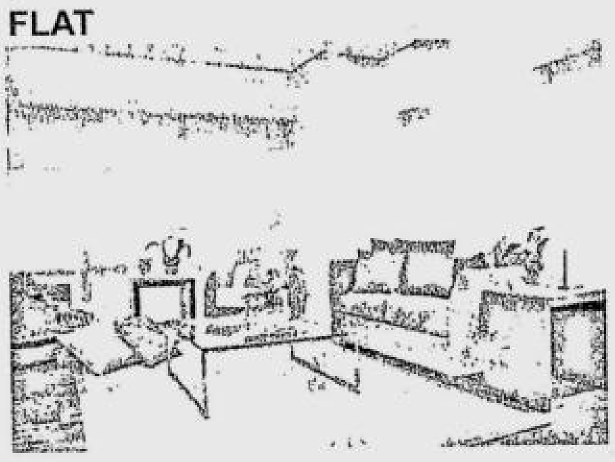

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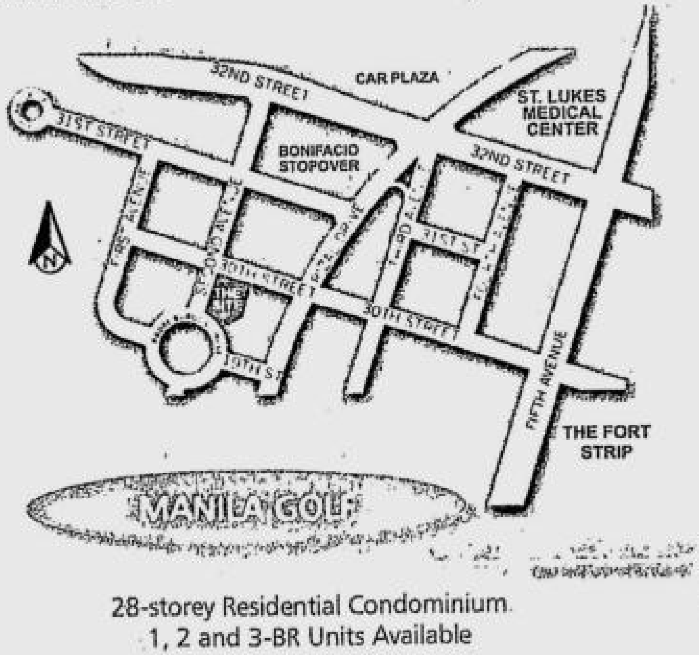

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Where are MBA programs going?

Graduates have functional skills but firms look for leadership

By Eduardo A. Morato Jr.
Contributor

IN FRONT OF THE ASIAN INSTITUTE OF Management is a sign that advertises the offering of "an intensive 16-month MBA" course. This replaces the traditional 22-month MBA offering. Whether this time reduction will reverse the recent trend of falling enrollments (92 students in 2006) compared to the pre-Asian crisis when almost 200 students enrolled, remains to be seen. AIM's experience, however, follows a global trend.

Before 1960, American universities awarded less than 5,000 graduate degrees in management education annually. Then, the 60s to the 90s ushered in a period of growth as the baby boomers came of age and women entered the work force in greater numbers. This was supported by global business and industry development.

Enrollments in graduate schools of business climbed to 25,000 annually in the 70s, 55,000 in the 80s and peaked to 80,000 in the very early 90s. There were only 300 schools offering MBAs in 1970 but this zoomed to 700 in 1995. Applicants taking the MBA entrance exams declined by 20 percent thereafter. (Lehmann and Jocz, 1997)

American experience

The American experience was probably precipitated by the proliferation of MBA offerings in Europe, Asia and Latin America. Most of the 400 European MBAs opened their doors after 1970. In Asia, AIM became the first major and premier regional MBA program when it opened in 1968. It held this status until each and every country in the continent decided to establish, endow and endorse top notch graduate schools of management of their own. Many of these MBA schools are heavily funded by their governments and have attained international accreditation.

The top-ranked institutions boast of faculty coming from the best doctoral programs in the world. In fact, the standard today is to have a faculty force composed of 100 percent PhDs and DBAs.

Over the years, the MBA scenario has become more and more competitive. The very high tuition fees exacted by the best MBA schools represent a substantial investment for the students and their parents. Moreover, the two-year duration of full-time MBA programs adds a substantial opportunity cost because students lose their earning capacity during those two years. When students calculate their return on their MBA investment, they take this into account.

Interviewing AIM's Indian students who comprise 60 percent of the MBAs, many reported borrowing large sums of money to come to the Philippines and study at AIM. Those good enough to compete for scholarships compare the financial package, academic offerings and placement prospects of the various Asian schools.

The Indian students of AIM calculate their monthly loan amortizations after graduation. At the equivalent of P30,000 to P40,000 loan amortization a month, they have to find jobs that could cover these payments. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of them apply for jobs in Singapore, Hongkong, Australia and the US. In fact, the Indian MBA graduates have resourcefully decided to maintain a "safe house" or apartment in Singapore while they are in the process of job hunting. This means that the major concern of the MBA student is not so much the length of the MBA course but the placement prospects for high paying jobs. They don't mind borrowing huge sums of money to earn a great education, but they want a sterling career thereafter. Come to think about it, the MBA students never complain about the training period, but they do complain about placements a lot.

Greater competition

The response of many MBA schools to greater competition has been to commoditize the product. Many European schools have designed five year business courses, with the first four years dedicated to the undergraduate degree and the fifth year serving as the MBA program.

In the US and Asia, MBA courses were shortened to 18 or, even, 12 months of full-time schooling. Only a few, like the Indian institute of Management, have kept their two-year programming.

If one were to listen intently to the Indian students of AIM, the positioning of their most desirable MBA program is to "guarantee 100 percent placement in the best paying jobs, prefer-

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Microsoft pilots VoIP remittance service in RP

Transferring money by OFWs made easy with Internet-enabled computer, cell phones

By Riza T. Olchondra

MICROSOFT PHILIPPINES has made good on its promise to launch a service that will allow overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to keep in touch with their families and even send money home using an Internet-enabled computer or cellular phone.

Microsoft was pilot-testing the new service in the Philippines late last year. That service was designed to use a dual-mode Windows Mobile 5.0 cellular phone or a Windows XP-enabled PC with a broadband connection.

Using these devices, OFWs can communicate through Instant Messaging (IM), call home for free using the Voice-over-Internet-Protocol (VoIP) and manage their money from anywhere in the world.

Microsoft, together with the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and RCBC, launched that service, called "One Follow Me," on Friday. RCBC account holders may refer to the "One Follow Me" service as "Tele-OFW" when dealing with the bank.

Microsoft Philippines managing director Antonio Javier Jr. told reporters that the initial target market were seafarers, "but as we go, we will tap other sectors and will also add on the content depending on the requirements."

Microsoft general manager for emerging projects Randy Granoveffer said the service was piloted in the Philipines because of its large OFW base.

OFWs are sea- and land-based Filipino workers based outside the country. Currently estimated at eight million or 15 percent of the working age population and growing at a rate of 50,000 net new OFWs a month, OFW remittances to the country amounted to $10.7 billion in 2005 alone (or about 10 percent of the country's annual gross domestic product for the year).

Granoveffer said RCBC was selected as a partner for the pilot project because of its tie-up with 259 international banks.

RCBC vice president Raymond Jose M. Abog said OFWs and beneficiaries could avail themselves of RCBC's TeleMoney account and then request the Tele-OFW service. A one-time enrollment fee of P100 will be charged, after which all remittances will be made for free.

The money sent is credited to their beneficiaries' accounts and can be withdrawn using ATMs.

OWWA Administrator Marianito Roque also said that RCBC was the pilot bank but other banks in the Philippines would later be tapped for the service.

He noted that the beauty of the "One Follow Me" service was that it could be used to send alerts about OWWA programs and services to the OFWS.

Roque said the project would also be launched globally, starting in Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the whole Gulf region and Europe.

Xbox 360 bests Wii, PlayStation 3 in US holiday sales

SAN FRANCISCO—XBOX 360 bested Wii and PlayStation 3 in US holiday season sales as Microsoft scored what analysts expected to be a lasting victory in the new-generation video game console war.

Sony's prior generation, PlayStation 2, outsold all the freshly launched consoles in a twist that industry insiders saw as a sign that new players were being enticed into the video game world.

Sony sold 1.4 million PlayStation 2 consoles in the United States in December, compared with only 491,000 of the PlayStation 3 (PS3) model, according to figures from market research firm NPD Group.

Meanwhile, buyers snapped up 1.1 million Xbox 360s and 604,000 of the family-oriented Wii consoles made by Nintendo.

"The Xbox 360 is the best-value proposition," Janco Partners analyst Mike Hickey told AFP. "The Wii is hard to find and the PS3 is overpriced."

Japan-based electronics firms Nintendo and Sony introduced their new consoles in November, while Microsoft had the Xbox 360 on store shelves a year earlier.

"The Wii was a disappointment," Hickey said. "That was the biggest surprise." Sony and Nintendo both failed to come to market with enough units to satisfy demand.

Desire for Wii consoles remains "absolutely phenomenal" and Nintendo will likely post strong sales when they ramp up distribution of the consoles, Hickey said.

"Any unit Nintendo got on the shelf would have been sold, and that means Nintendo left half the dollars on the table in 2006 and will make up for it in 2007," Hickey said.

"Wii is the first digital game board that everybody can play—from your child to your mom. Everyone will be buying the Wii." PS3 will suffer a more dismal fate unless it comes up with a blockbuster game title to entice players away from Xbox 360.

PS3 is the highest price console, with the premium model selling for $600 while Xbox 360 is priced at $400 and Wii at $250 in the US market. *AFP*

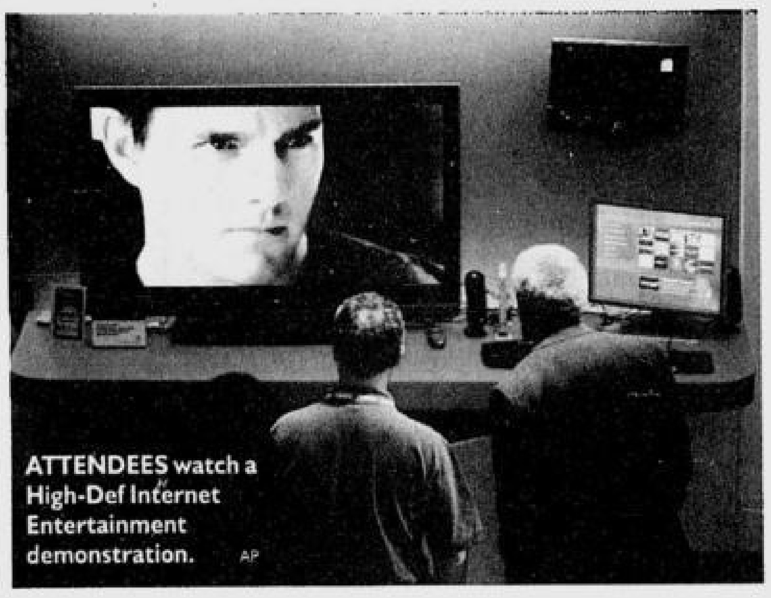
A sneak peek into the latest in lifestyle gadgets

APPLE CEO Steve Jobs, left, and Cingular CEO Stan Sigman, shake hands during Jobs' keynote address at the recent MacWorld Conference & Expo in San Francisco. AP

CHINA'S largest appliance maker, Haier Group, is teaming up with a subsidiary of media giant AOL to make a wireless media player that can stream or download content without hooking up to a PC. AP

VAIO C Series
Notebooks

PETER Johnson, left, looks at the Sony Vaio C series notebook display at last week's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. AP



ATTENDEES watch a High-Def Internet Entertainment demonstration. AP

LAS VEGAS—AS THE INTERNATIONAL Consumer Electronics Show prepared to close here, much of the buzz on the convention floor focused on products introduced 965 kilometers away by Apple Inc.

In fact, Yoshi Yamada, chief executive of Panasonic Corp. of North America, ditched CES for part of Tuesday to fly to the Macworld expo in San Francisco just so he could sit in the audience to see CEO Steve Jobs introduce Apple's new products—the iPhone and the Apple TV set-top box—in person.

"I really wanted to be there and I was very impressed with the iPhone," Yamada said after returning to CES. Panasonic is the brand of Japanese electronics maker Matsushita Electric Industrial Co.

At every CES, the world's largest tech trade show with more than 2,700 exhibitors competing for attention, usually only a handful of gadgets manage to rise above the din.

After Apple announced its cell phone, it hogged the limelight—even though it had no official presence at the Las Vegas show.

"Apple's just one company. They need CES as much as CES needs them," said Christopher Null, a columnist and analyst for Yahoo Inc.'s technology website. "But it is unfortunate that people are trying to get the word out about their products, and they're one-upped by Steve Jobs."

Still, many CES products managed to find a spotlight.

Guaranteed attention goes to the biggest TV—this year's went to Sharp's 108-inch LCD behemoth. Other ooh-and-aah candidates included a new portable music player from SanDisk Corp. and a sleek, double-sided, combination cell phone-music player from Samsung Electronics Co.

Several tech companies here unveiled products designed to bring Internet content to televisions—similar to the newly unveiled Apple TV.

Netgear Inc., for instance, unveiled its Digital Entertainer HD, a $349-media receiver that accesses high-definition videos, photos, TV shows and music stored across multiple computers on a home network and streams the content to televisions in the home. A "Follow Me" function, using separate wireless stations, allows users to pause video in one room and resume it in another.

Sony Corp. showed a module that will hook onto its upcoming line of televisions to grab video and photos from its Internet-content partners for playback on the TV. (The partners so far include Yahoo Inc. and Time Warner Inc.'s AOL.)

A growing number of gadgets meant to deliver entertainment anywhere, anytime were also on display.

LG Electronics Co. showcased the LG9400, a cell phone that will let users watch TV simulcasts from a variety of networks including NBC, CBS and Fox, ESPN and Comedy Central. The LG phone, as well as another by Samsung Electronics Co., will be the first to support Verizon Wireless' V Cast Mobile TV service, powered by Qualcomm Inc.'s MediaFlo technology. The Verizon TV service will be available in March.

SanDisk, the world's biggest supplier of flash data storage products, pushed further into the media player space with its Sansa Connect, a Wi-Fi enabled MP3 player that does not require connecting to a computer to download music or stream Internet radio. It begins sales in the US for $249.99 in March.

"A lot of different types of companies are all competing with each other at a higher level," said Gartner Inc. analyst Jon Erensen. "Stand-alone portable players are adding wireless capability and other networking capabilities in order to compete with mobile phones."

Big TVs were not to be outdone, however, by its tiny-screen cousins. Technology giants such as Toshiba Corp., Panasonic, Samsung and Sony again dazzled attendees with the biggest and best in televisions.

Every major manufacturer improved their LCDs by doubling frames per second to 120, thereby cutting down on blurring during fast-motion scenes. Technologies to make plasma TVs display even deeper blacks and richer colors were also demonstrated.

Several companies took a stab at resolving the war over competing high-definition DVD formats. LG rolled out its "Super Multi Blue" player that can play Blu-ray and HD DVD discs on a single tray. The player, and similar PC drive, will sell for $1,199 in early February.

Warner Bros. announced a high definition DVD disc that can hold films and TV shows in both Blu-ray and HD DVD formats. The new disc is called Total HD.

LG's North American president, Michael Ahn, described its newest development as an attempt to end consumer "confusion" over which format would win out and end hesitation slowing uptake of the machines.

Erensen said the products were designed to focus on consumer needs rather than engineering prowess in handling a wide array of media content and formats.

"People are really trying to set up end-to-end solutions so the consumer can get it out of the box and get it working," he said. AP

AQUOS
108" LCD TV

JUNICHI Katano, of Japan, tries to feel the heat generated from Sharp's 108-inch LCD television screen. AP

THE TORNADO allows users to transfer files from one computer to another. REUTERS

Excellence trainor bullish about RP

PAUL ROBERE OF ROBERE AND Associates Inc., was in Manila recently to share ideas with local CEOs and managers on how to compete in a global marketplace based on his many years' experience working with Thai service and manufacturing industries and the Thai government.

Robere also met with directors of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) and Philexport. The Federation of Philippine Industries (FPI) also welcomed Robere at their monthly board meeting at Makati Palace, where he described to members and directors, alike, how small to medium enterprises could come together to avail of cost-effective management system and business improvement consultancy. During the meeting, Robere Associates Philippines was inducted as the newest member of FPI.

At the end of his visit Robere said: "We can all sit around and blame the government and each other for our lack of market penetration and profitability, but it is mainly through our own efforts that we will improve. It is good to see that the Philippines has the potential to become a serious competitor in the global arena and that many business leaders realize this. Robere Associates Philippines has an excellent team that will be working with business leaders such as these, the PCCI, FPI and Philexport over the next six months to put in place programs that will push the Philippines back up the ladder to become one of the leading Asian economies."

Robere has provided training courses in Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam and Pakistan, has helped more than 1,000 companies achieve business excellence and international certification to standards such as ISO9001 and ISO 14001. He has over 35 years of experience in business and industry as a senior executive and is also managing director to Robere & Associates, a Thai-based international organization.

As a certified instructor, Robere has taught courses in Management, Communication and Human Resources for the University of Maryland and Ramkhamhaeng University in Thailand, as well as in various colleges and universities in California. He has provided various lectures in business excellence and management at Bangkok University and Chulalongkorn University to members of graduate and undergraduate programs. He had also worked with Dr. Edwards Deming, guru of Quality Management Systems who helped rebuild post-war Japan. From Deming, Robere learned that "(one's) job—(one's) only job—is continuous improvement."

Robere has written on management and quality, including: process improvement, development of Quality Management Systems, continuous improvement, benchmarking and operational performance management. His book, "Benchmarking, a tool for continuous improvement," has been translated into Thai.

ROBERE

MOVEMENTS

Baker is new Ford Philippines head

FORD GROUP PHILIPPINES STRENGTHENS its leadership team via the appointment of Richard Baker as president, while Henry Co now moves on as chairman of Ford Group Philippines. Together, Baker and Co will ensure the continued growth of Ford's operations as a key domestic player and export hub in the region.

In his new role as chairman, Henry Co will focus on identifying growth opportunities for the export and domestic markets while strengthening strategic stakeholder relationships in the business community and government.

Richard Baker's appointment as president plays an important role as Ford prepares to move into the next phase of growth in the Philippines. Baker's extensive track record in marketing, sales and service will be key in strengthening Ford's foothold in the local and regional markets.

Baker is the former president director of Ford Motor Co. Indonesia. He has 30 years of experience working for Ford in Asia Pacific and North America. He brings a wealth of marketing, sales and service knowledge across diverse markets including South Africa, Taiwan, Japan and North America. Specific responsibilities have included regional sales and market development for Asia, expansion of sales and distribution networks, dealer development and driving business growth strategies for the company, brand and its products.

"The recent developments at Ford Group Philippines, with Richard Baker as president, is in line with our goal to further strengthen our position in the local market and reinforce the Philippines' vital role in Ford's operation in the Asia Pacific region," said Co. "Our new roles will allow us to focus on key aspects of our expanding business, which is to drive revenue growth and ensure competitiveness in the domestic market and Asean export markets," Co added.

Co and Baker assumed their new roles on Jan. 1, 2007.

Del Rosario is new MAP president

ALBERT F. DEL Rosario, chair of Gotuaco del Rosario & Associates, and former Philippine ambassador to the United States, is the president of the Management Association of the Philippines (MAP) for 2007. Del Rosario is the 58th president of MAP since it was set up in 1950.

After serving as the country's envoy to the United States for five years, Del Rosario has recently returned to the private sector. He is currently chair of BusinessWorld Publishing Corp., Makati Foundation for Education and Asia Traders Insurance Corp. He serves as director in various companies and nonprofit organizations, including PLDT, Infrontier (Philippines) Inc., First Pacific Co. (Hong Kong), PT Indofood Sukses Makmur Tbk (Indonesia), Landco Pacific Corp., Philippine Cancer Society and is a member of the board of governors of International Graduate University (Washington, DC).

Other officers of the MAP for 2007 are Edgar O. Chua, chair and president of Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., as vice president; Baltazar N. Endriga, managing director of MAP Research and Development Foundation, as treasurer; Pacita U. Juan, CEO of Figaro Coffee Co., as assistant treasurer; and Senen C. Bacani, president of Ultrex Management and Investments Corp., as secretary.

The other members of the MAP board of governors are Franco G. del Rosario, managing consultant and CEO of Six Sigma Consulting, Cesar V. Purisima, chair of Summersault Inc., Carlos C. Ejercito, president and CEO of United Laboratories Group of Companies, and Felino A. Palafox Jr., managing partner of Palafox Associates.

Philips appoints new CFO

THE MANAGEMENT OF PHILIPS ELECtronics and Lighting Inc. has announced the appointment of Maria Rosana "Rosan" Hernandez-Callueng as chief finance officer effective Jan. 2, 2007, succeeding Peter Akins who is returning to Philips Australia. Callueng joined Philips in 1994 as corporate logistics officer, and has since risen to become regional internal audit manager and later, financial controller of the lighting division until her appointment as CFO. Prior to joining Philips, she had had stints at Joaquin Cunanan/Price Waterhouse Philippines and San Miguel Corp. A certified public accountant, she finished her business administration and accountancy degree at UP and her masters degree in business management at the Asian Institute of Management.

Preserving . . .

From page B4

5. Differences should be leveraged.

As fellow scientists adopted and improved upon Appert's discovery, they leveraged his ideas to suit their goals of commercial rather than military success. Eventually, Appert's ideas would spawn the canning industry.

For information on John Maxwell e-mail at maxwell@inspire.ph or call 813-2049/2732 God bless!

Where are MBA . . .

From page B2-1

ably in multinational companies with huge expatriate benefits."

However, only the very best MBA schools can make such a "guarantee". In order to do so; their student recruits and teaching faculty must be of a very high caliber. The school should have professors with "internationally-recognized brand names", having written definitive books on management. The students should have had sufficient experience before their MBA course, exhibiting leadership potentials and a good managerial track record. This means that they must enter the MBA at a sufficiently-seasoned age.

When I was serving as the Dean of the Institute at AIM, I commissioned a survey of corporations who regularly recruited MBAs from our school. We asked them what they were looking for in our graduates.

The top four answers were: (1) leadership qualities; (2) people skills; (3) character and personality; and (4) values. The fifth answer was Strategic Management.

When I probed some companies about our graduates who did not meet their expectations, they cited the graduates' inability to translate ideas into implementable programs, and their doing and people skills. Surprisingly, a US university yielded the same results when it surveyed 8,000 executives about their preferred MBA recruits.

Functional skills

Obviously, the recruiting companies were not as worried about the graduates' functional skills (such as marketing, finance and operations management). They were more concerned about the graduate as a principled and dynamic leader who can lead people and operationalize plans.

What do the surveys mean for the future of the MBA programs? For most schools, they would be content to train students in the tools and techniques of business management. For the schools who want to provide the greatest value, they would put more emphasis on leadership development and self-mastery. Corporations have also expressed the need for greater cross-functional skills, which would entail higher organizational coordination and orchestration. This is where the people and doing skills would be most challenging. However, these are not the forte of most MBA schools who prefer to "teach subjects" rather than "mentor students" and there is a world of difference between the two. The former focuses on the knowledge content, the latter emphasizes the person.

In order to pursue the preferred MBA paradigm, it would be wise to take heed of Peter Drucker's philosophy that management is a liberal art because it is steeped in dynamic social organizations. This direction is easy to espouse but hard to implement. New education methodologies with highly liberating and human philosophies must be invented or reinvented. But that is the subject of another discourse.

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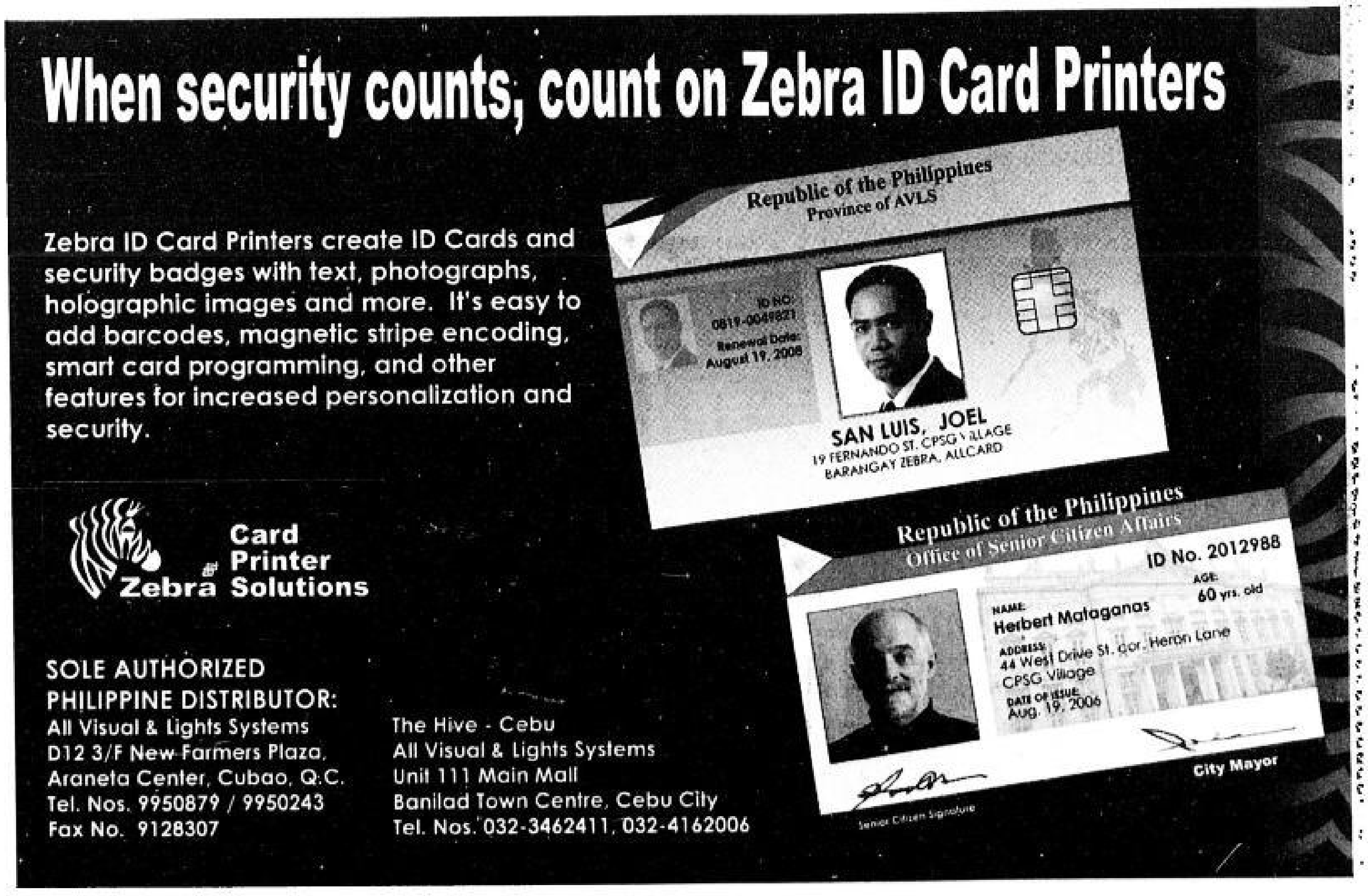
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Preserving innovation leadership

A LEADER'S WAY

John C. Maxwell

AS NAPOLEON BONAPARTE sized up potential conquests, he was troubled by the fatality rate of his army. For every soldier lost in combat, four were dying from diseases. Most of the sicknesses were caused by spoiled food or malnutrition.

Like any great leader, Napoleon knew his goals rested upon the well-being of the men who fought for him on the front lines. Weak, starving and fatigued soldiers would be worthless on the battlefield. "An army marches on its stomach," Napoleon concluded. An army must be fed well to fight well.

To make sure his soldiers didn't starve, Napoleon needed innovation. He had to find a new way of thinking designed to work around the constraints of usual military rations. Napoleon assumed that if he could preserve food for longer stretches, then his army could sustain itself farther from home and for greater lengths of time.

To spark inventive applications of his idea, Napoleon put up a 12,000-franc prize for anyone able to improve the means for keeping food fresh for the French army. Inspired by the award money, a French chef, Nicholas Appert, captured the prize. Appert's innovative preservation method involved placing hermetically sealed jars in boiling water. The seal protected the food from outside contamination, and heating the jar sterilized any bacteria inside.

Napoleon quickly implemented Appert's invention, giving his men more durable and long-lasting food supplies than their battlefield adversaries. The innovation gave him a competitive advantage on military campaigns.

Napoleon's dilemma mirrors the challenges faced by leaders in today's market. Limitations prevent the realization of dreams and undercut the success of organizations.

In an article adapted from "Making the Invisible Visible: The Human Principles for Sustaining Innovation" by Robert B. Rosenfeld, The Center for Creative Leadership shows how leaders, like Napoleon, can overcome the problems they face by embracing five principles for sustained innovation.

1. Innovation starts when people convert problems to ideas.

For Napoleon, innovation began when he identified the problem of rampant malnutrition among his military and generated an idea that could alleviate the problem.

2. Innovation needs a system.

Napoleon built a formal, top-down system in which he targeted the need and dedicated national resources to the solution (prize money from the national treasury).

3. Passion is the fuel, and pain is the hidden ingredient.

Appert's passion for wealth and success motivated him throughout 15 years of painful trial and error before he finally arrived upon an innovative method of preservation.

4. Physical proximity drives effective exchange.

Appert published his findings for other scientists, allowing for the swift proliferation and implementation of his discovery across Europe.

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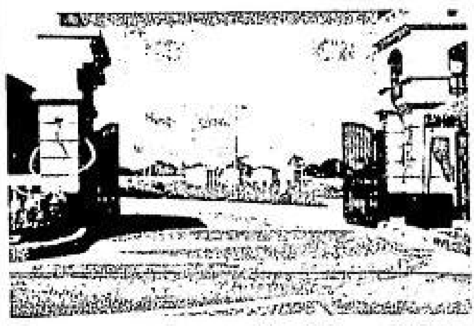
Brisk Building Activities at Vista Verde Village



The newly-constructed Vista Verde gate with houses rising in the background.

Vista Verde Village, a new residential project in Cagayan de Oro City, is fast taking shape with the erection and landscaping of its entrance gate and the construction of several houses within. The streets in the village have been paved and already, four of the five model houses have been built. Construction is also ongoing on Vista Verde's clubhouse and other amenities.

Vista Verde Village lies along Masterson Avenue, the major thoroughfare from the airport to downtown Cagayan de Oro and is located right beside the future site of Corpus Christi School on the left and Pueblo Golf Course's Hole No. 16 on the right. Aside from a road from Cluster 6 of the Pueblo Golf Estates, there is a connecting road at the back (Regatta Boulevard Extension) that allows residents to go to SM and the northern portions of the Pueblo de Oro Township without having to pass the highway.

Vista Verde Village is part of the Pueblo de Oro Township, a 360-hectare masterplanned mixed-use community in Cagayan de Oro. Within the Township are the Pueblo de Oro Golf & Country Club, a 72-par all-weather championship golf course designed by Robert Trent Jones II; the Pueblo de Oro Business Park with SM as a major locator; the Pueblo de Oro I.T. Ecozone, the first I.T. Park in Mindanao with Cagayan de Oro's first call center, Link2Support; residential villages; and commercial areas.

A limited number of choice lots and house and lot units are still available. For more information, contact Pueblo de Oro at telephone numbers +632-811-4656 (Makati), +6388-858-8976 (Cagayan de Oro) or e-mail sales@pueblodeoro.com. You may also visit the Pueblo de Oro website at www.pueblodeoro.com.

ADVT

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LIFESTYLE

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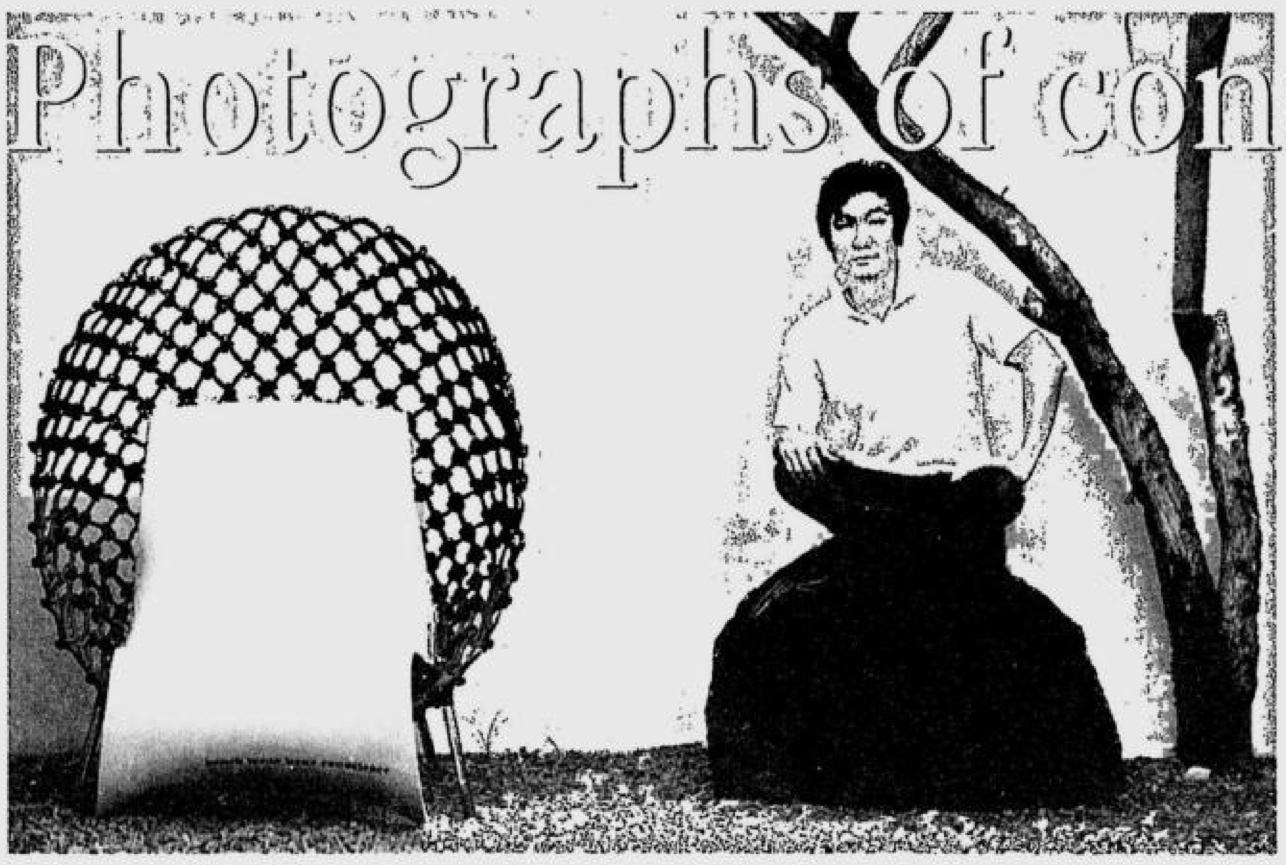
Photographs of conscience



Photographer Jun de Leon captures the real lives of real people in a book that mixes style, art and heart

KENNETH Cobonpue (here with one of his globally renowned designs) wears his Conscience.

STYLE, INGENUITY AND PHILANTHROPY COME TOGETHER IN "Wear Your Conscience," an 87-page coffee-table photo book featuring Philippine society's cream of the crop in business, entertainment, sports, art, media and charity.

Supporting a common advocacy, the subjects wear Bench's special Wear Your Conscience clothing line, which stands as a gentle reminder to people to give back and pay the blessings forward. It highlights the significance of social responsibility amid today's consumerism and hedonism.

The individuals featured in the book are living proof that generously giving back to the community remains essential in living. They are living proof that success means nothing unless it is shared.

"Wear Your Conscience is our way of keeping the spirit of charity alive. We aim to encourage others to help and be mindful of those who need assistance," Ben Chan of Bench said.

Collaborating in the book are Jun de Leon, social chroniclers Raul Manzano and Philip Cu-Unjieng, and retail giant Bench.

The coffee-table book is for the benefit of the Sa Aklat Sisikat Foundation (SAS), a nonprofit organization that promotes the love and habit of reading among Filipino children.

PHOTOGRAPHS/ C3

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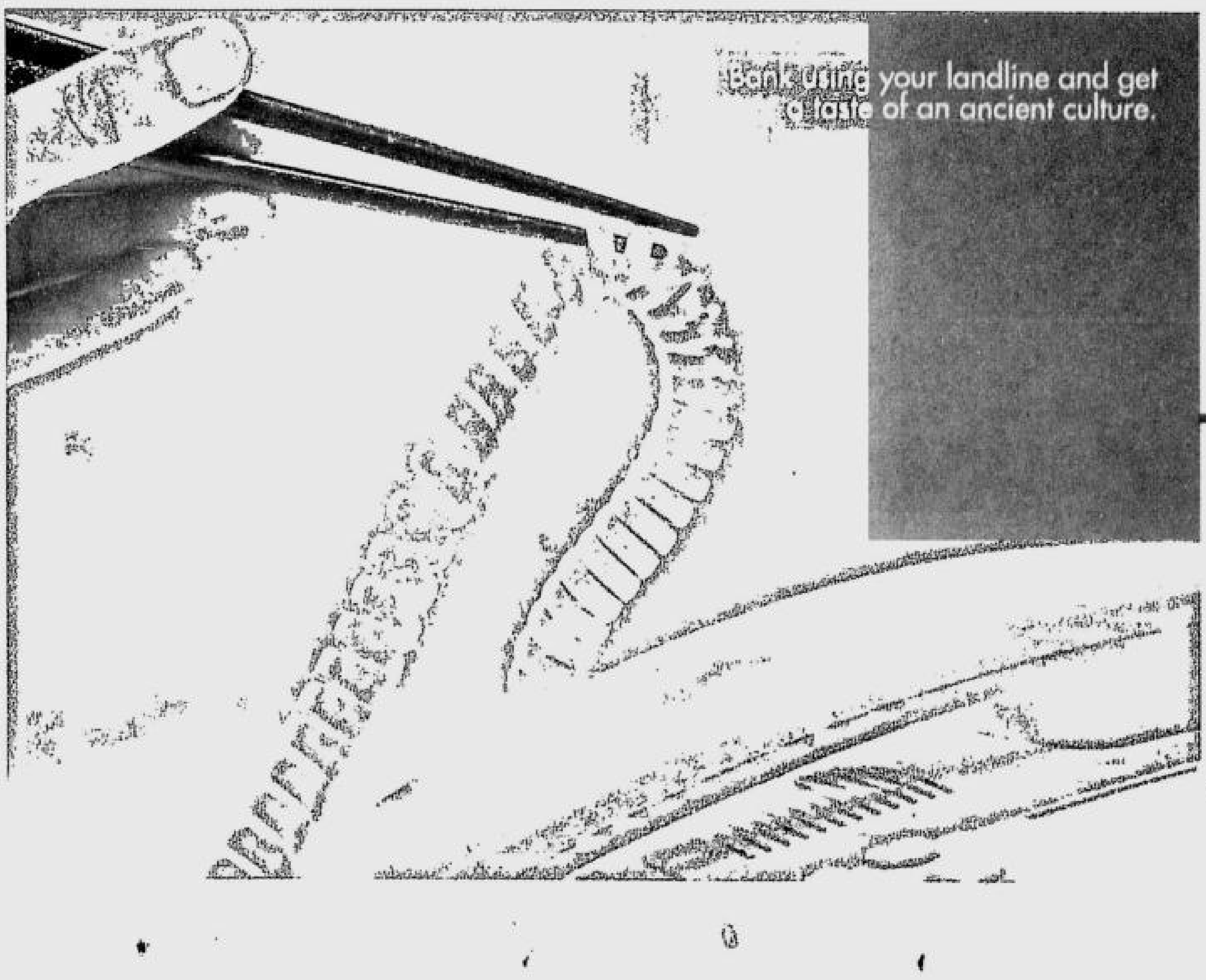

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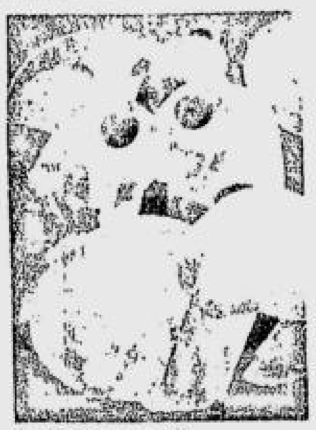
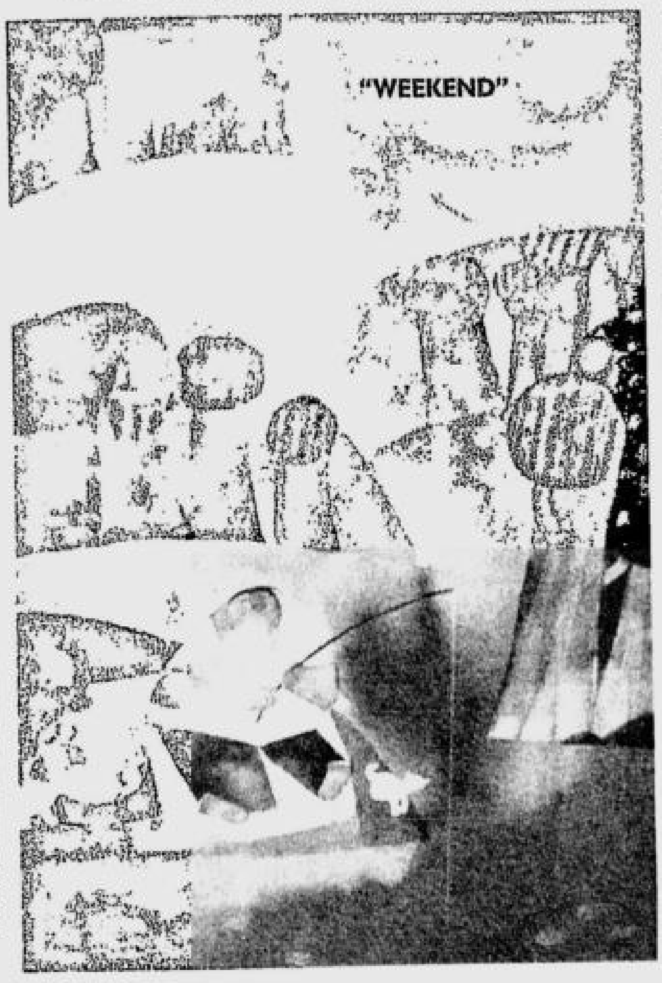
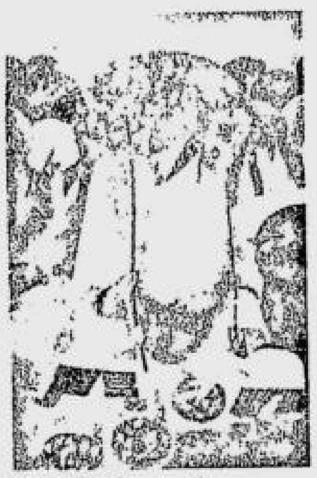


"FISH Harvest"





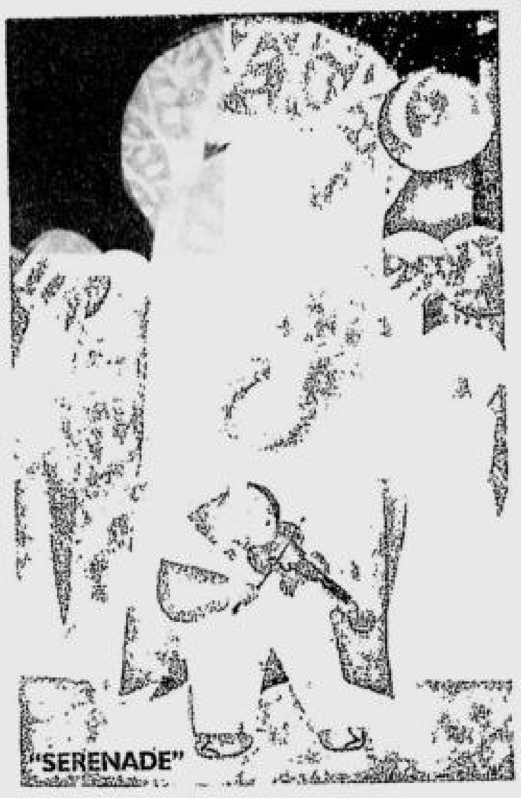
"FRUIT Harvest"

Dreamy scenes by Obemio

WITH DREAMY TRANSLUcence brought by sure-handed strokes of watercolor, Roel Obemio lends seeming lightness to ample-bodied subjects in "Big Dreams," on display at 1/of Gallery, 2/F, Serendra, Bonifacio High St., Bonifacio Global City, Taguig.

Depicting such scenes as a man fishing along a riverbank or playing violin by the woods against rolling hills, Obemio visualizes bounty not only in terms of corpulence but also idyllic calm and ease.

"Big Dreams" runs until Jan. 19. Call 9013152.



"SERENADE"

Sculpture without instruction

By Benjamin V. Afuang
Contributor

ON THE DOMINANT AND YET multilayer theme of the Asian "world," four sculptors bent on taking a new direction for the art form are exhibiting their latest works at ArtAsia Galleries starting Jan. 20.

Indeed, quietly but firmly, sculptors Seb Chua, Nonoy Gepte, Jun Vicaldo and Max Chan have been turning out an array of figurative and nonfigurative pieces that decidedly can incite popular interest in sculpture locally.

Their exhibit, "Seasons of Red," brings together new and old views of "oriental" figures which present-day Asians can identify their own images on the themes of human ties (or lack of them), Asian lore and folk beliefs. Some of the pieces show a diversity in content and style on the influence of contemporary Western trends, but most of the exhibited works have the distinct Asian directness, a vision without artifice, and simple grace and ease.

Using only a few of their favorite materials—metal, glass and wood—these sculptors speak of the importance of sculptural art in life. They articulate much of human feelings and suggest how they can be tamed for better relationships, or where emotions can edify the normal course of life.

The sculptors also convincingly state that they "look" at things from all angles and perspectives, and are stimulated by three-dimensional objects; hence their attention to contrasting strength and solidity with frailty when they shape figures and forms on their chosen subjects.

All is immediately coherent even to the average viewer who can better appreciate sculpture without instruction. Clearly these sculptors work very hard, but their fine creations don't show the effort.

Among the four artists, Chua likes most doing contemporary figurative pieces, which he describes as "pure form showing balance and fluidity." Most of his pieces easily connect to the viewer as they express vividly an emotional, rather than cerebral, art "message." One of his works, titled "Longing," showing a lady in white seated on a ledge, best expresses his work "method": "I look for that moment when a new form comes to life, a form that embodies a presence, a sense of life to the art piece."

Gepte's principal works seem to favor the classical female nude and the intimate ties among lovers. He employs distinct dexterity in making some of his female figures look virtuous enough to "offer" themselves to the heavens, while others seem to want to hide in shame. He is so gifted in capturing this duality in form that he did a series of them, half of which he decided to keep in his workshop for a future exhibit.

"LONGING," by Seb Chua

Vicaldo displays as much success as Gepte's in putting passion into his figures in some kind of bond or other. His works show a contemporary touch, apparently a result of his past apprenticeship with National Artist Napoleon Abueva.

Chan, who signs "MX" on his pieces, unveils his latest pieces that are definitely a far cry from his old functional works in wood. One of these recent works won first prize at the annual Art Association of the Philippines fest for its self-determined form and style.

It's worth telling that all four sculptors had won AAP awards before exhibiting as a group. But more than reaping awards and recognition, they say they look forward to helping propagate sculpture and make it as vibrant as the other art forms in the country.

"Seasons of Red" is the second of several exhibits by Chua, Gepte, Vicaldo and MX as resident artists of ArtAsia. Upon their invitation, guest sculptors Ramon Orlina, Fred Baldemor, Taal Mayon, José Mendoza, Imao, Mike Cacnio, Contreras and Ral Arogante are joining this group show.

"EMBRACE," by Nonoy Gepte

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MARGARITA Delgado and Lizzie Zobel with the students of the Leodegario Victorino Elementary School. At left, Paolo Prieto and Sandy Prieto-Romualdez

Photographs of conscience

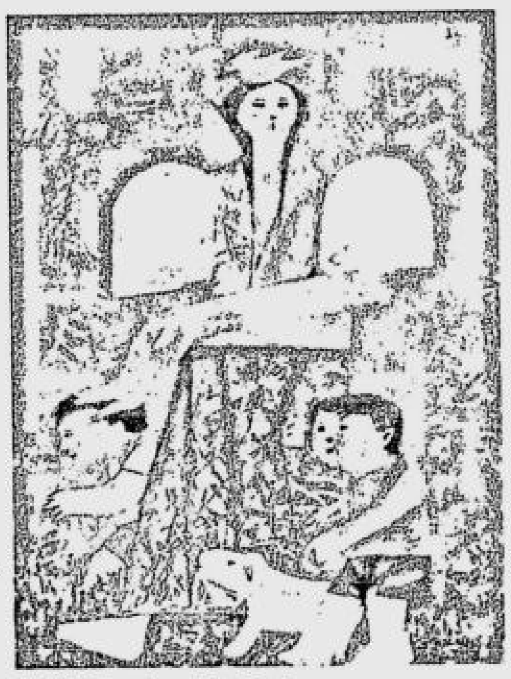
From page C1

HOTSHOT couple Kris Aquino and James Yap get intimate and reflective.

"Our vision is to build a nation of readers," said SAS director Margarita Delgado. "We work with public schools all over the country, providing resources to motivate students to make reading a part of their daily lives. We are very thankful to projects such as Wear Your Conscience—to Bench and everyone who lent their generous support in this endeavor. The help this book provides goes a long way in furthering our cause."

Wear Your Conscience features 40 "very real" portraits. De Leon captures the truth in his photographs of the Zobel brothers Jaime Augusto and Fernando; Prieto siblings Paolo and Sandy Romualdez; Gokongwei sisters Jay, Robina, Marcia, Faith and Liza; Sa Aklat Sisikat's Margarita Delgado and Lizzie Zobel; a satirical image of Nenita Floirendo with daughters Lind, Maricris and Marissa; artist Ben Cabrera; Bea Zobel Jr. with daughters Paloma and Monica; former Miss Universe Margie Floirendo with daughters Gabbi and Monica; Chu Chu Madrigal, Susie Ortigas and Ging Montinola; triathletes Triccia Chongbian, Fred Uytengsu, Ricky Yupangco and Maxie Abad; Richard and Lucy Torres-Gomez; and Kris Aquino and James Yap.

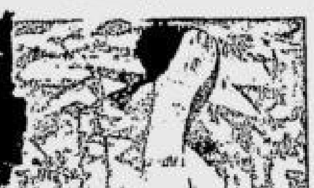
The Wear Your Conscience book and special clothing line are available at Bench, Herbench and Superbench stores. The project is presented by Bench with support from 2GO and Aboitiz.



"TWO Brothers," by Malang

Malang's birthday show

CELEBRATING HIS 79TH BIRTHDAY, Malang mounts a one-man exhibit titled "Works on Paper" at the SM Megamall Art Center. On view from Jan. 20-Feb. 4, the exhibit features more than 40 new works in gouache.



"WOMAN in White"

Malang has been celebrating his birthday with a major one-man exhibit in recent years. He uses gouache in his latest set of works, the medium he admits he is most comfortable using.

The reason Malang has produced so many works over the years is that he always tries to paint every single day, sketching a few lines even before he eats breakfast or touching up a few details before he goes to bed. Practice is the key, though he also keeps it interesting by being open to new ideas and new painting techniques.

A self-taught painter, Malang began as a designer for the Manila Chronicle and its supplement, This Week magazine.

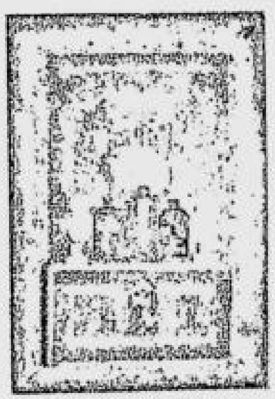
"Works on Paper" is organized by West Gallery. The SM Megamall Art Center is at the 4/L, Bldg. A, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City. Call 6341284.

VISUAL ARTS

Book on Fabian de la Rosa

THE COFFEE-TABLE BOOK, "FABIAN DE LA ROSA and His Times," published by Filipiniana.Net of Vibal Publishing, will be launched on Jan. 17, 6:30 p.m., at the UP Jorge Vargas Museum and Filipiniana Research Center (Roxas Avenue, UP Diliman). The occasion will also see the premiere of a short film on the Old Filipino Master. De la Rosa was the first dean of the UP School of Fine Arts, who lived and practiced through the Spanish and American colonial periods. As the leading academic painter at the time of social revolution and nationalism in the country, he was and continues to be a great influence in Philippine visual arts. Call 9281925.

Roldan at West



"ESPERANZA," by Norberto Roldan

West Gallery (4/L, Bldg. A, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City) will show Norberto Roldan's "Esperanza y Caridad," Jan. 18-30. The terms "hope" and "charity" serve as the springboard to the new pieces. Roldan paints miniature shrines consisting of old photos and potent items commonly known as *anting-anting*. They reflect not just Christian values but the people's penchant to seek help based on animist beliefs. Roldan took up fine arts at UST. Call 6341284.

'Coffee with Artists' at Artspace

"Coffee with Artists," a collection of new, large-scale paintings and sculpture done for a book, will be on view and for sale on Jan. 15-21, 3/F, Glorietta 4, Artspace. Artists include Bart Aguas, Julio Austria, Andres Barrioquinto, Jeho Bitancor, Salvador Ching, Florence Cinco, Ferdinand Doctolero, Joey Ibay, Rico Lescano, Lindslee, Bobby Nuestro, Raul Piedra, Tres Roman, Farley del Rosario, Ivan Roxas, Elmer Roslin, Ronaldo Ruiz, CJ Tañedo and several others.

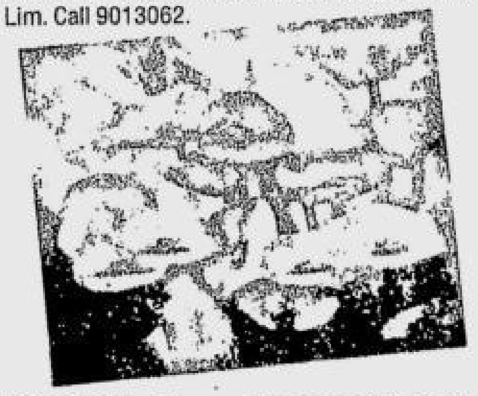
HERZON and Rhea de la Rosa

De la Rosa siblings in Seattle

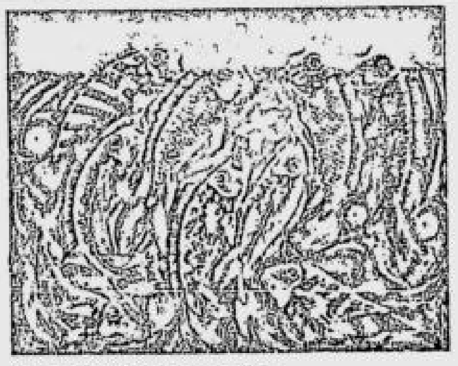
The Seattle Center Production and 4 Cultyres present an exhibit (US Tour) by Herzon and Rhea de la Rosa until Jan. 28. Each artist will hold four shows depicting Filipino culture. The siblings are the children of the late Ibarra de la Rosa. The event is under the auspices of the Filipino Arts and Cultures under director Roger del Rosario.

Onglepho at Asia Art Gallery

James Onglepho will hold his 27th one-man show on Jan. 26. The show will be the inaugural exhibit of the Asia Art Gallery at the SM Mall of Asia (Unit 2113, Entertainment Mall). Guests of honor are Wee Le Peng, Michael Say and Henry Lim. Call 9013062.



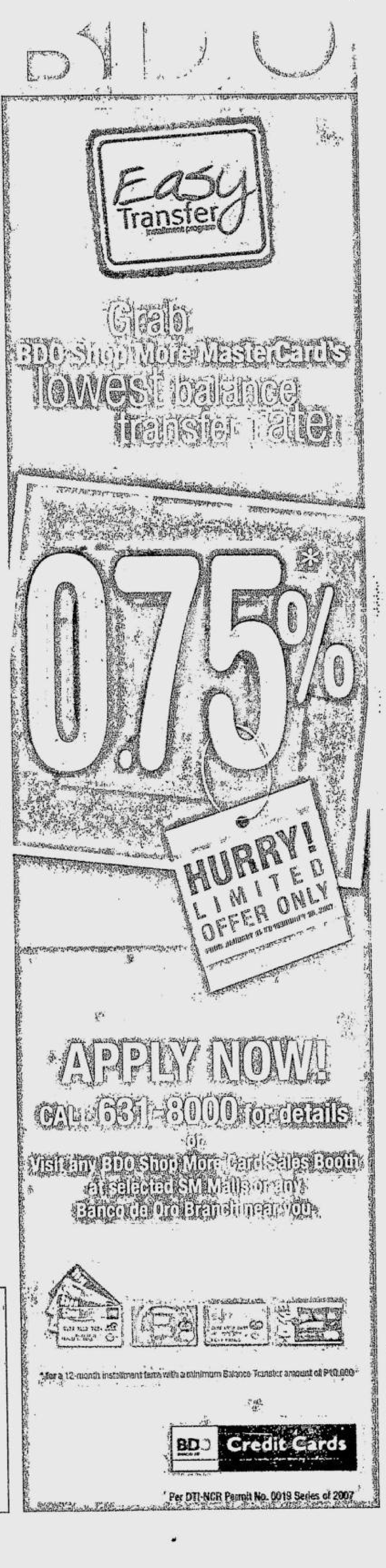
"AMONG the Flowers," by James Onglepho



"BLESSINGS," by Parial

New gallery

GALERIE RAPHAEL (2/F, THE PIAZZA, SERENdra Mall, Fort Bonifacio Global City) will formally open its doors for art auctions and exhibits beginning Jan. 17. For its inaugural show, Galerie Raphael will show museum quality works of several leading artists who have been regularly selected for inclusion in the Sotheby's and Christie's auctions, such as National Artists Arturo Luz and Jose Joya and Philippine Presidential Medal of Merit Awardees Juvenal Sanso, Nena Saguil and Federico Aguilar Alcuaz, among others. Call 0928-7613291 for details.



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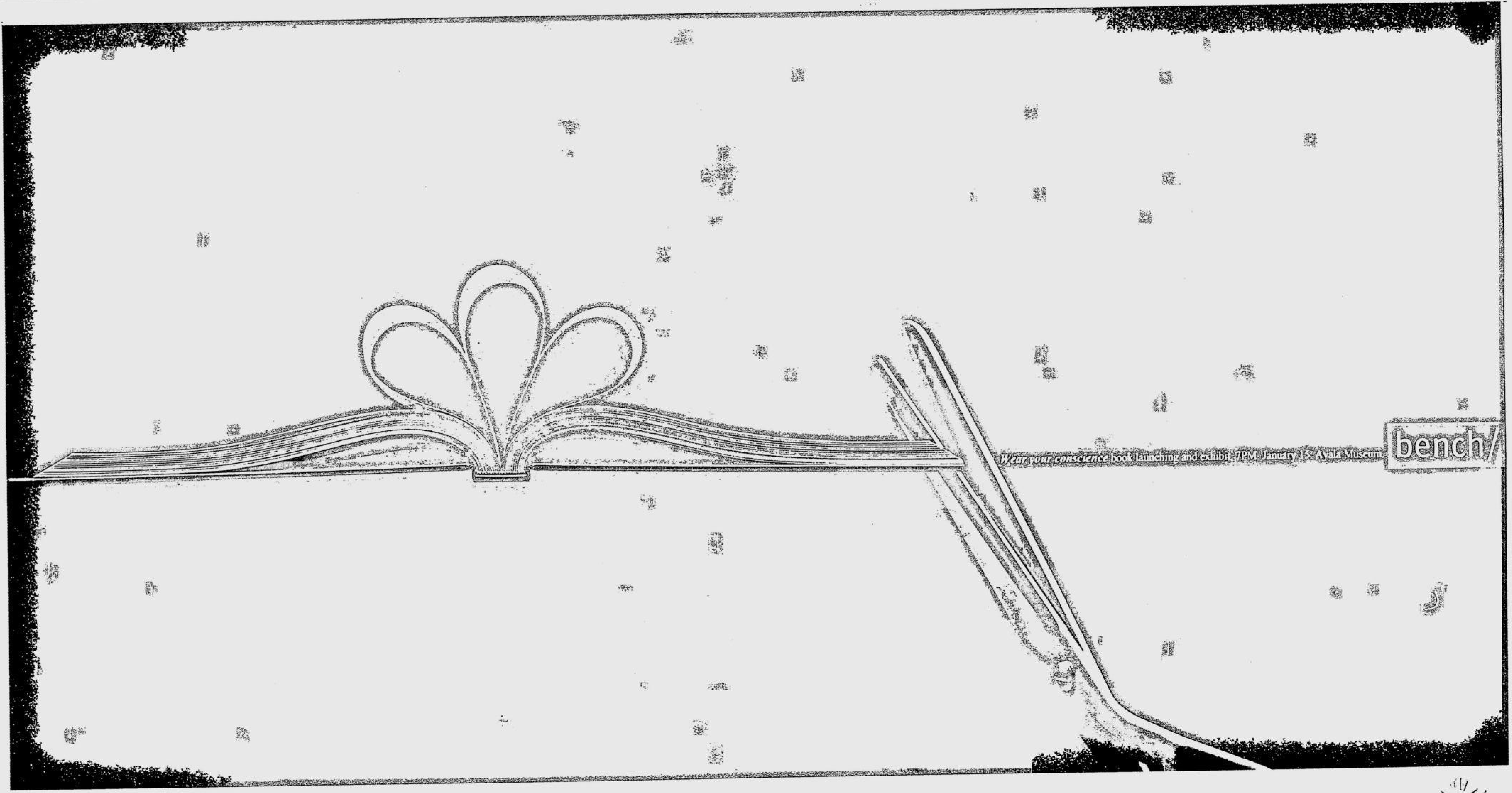

Wear your conscience book launching and exhibit, 7PM, January 15, Ayala Museum.

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St. Scholastica's School of Music is holding a yearlong series of musical activities to commemorate the founding of the school

By Amadís Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

THE FIRST MISSIONARY BENEDICTINE Sisters arrived in Manila from Germany in 1906 and established a convent school which would become St. Scholastica's College (and which celebrated its centenary last year).

The nuns had observed then that the Filipinos "love music so much that they cannot live without it. Most of the children display an outstanding talent for this art as well as for dancing, an understanding far beyond their years, and perfect natural grace..."

Ahem. Even then, foreigners were taking note of the Pinoy's exceptional ability in the performing arts.

The Benedictine Sisters asked their motherhouse to send a piano teacher here, and a pedagogue arrived in the distinguished person of Sr. Baptista Battig, from Silesia, Germany, who had given up a promising career as a concert pianist to take up the veil.

She arrived in October 1907, and almost immediately started to give piano lessons. The story is that a German benefactor of the Sisters, Augustus Gnandt, went around Tondo (where the school was located) ringing a bell

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MALL EVENTS THIS JANUARY

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Wednesdays, Live Bands @ The Strip, 7pm
Fridays & Saturdays, Live Bands @ Marks Bar, 8pm
Saturdays, Storytelling @ Books for Less, 3pm

STARMALL
EDSA SHAW
718-1886

Jan. 16, 23, & 27, Raging Divas Contest "Gaya Mo Toh!", 4pm, 2/L
Jan. 20, Mr. & Ms. JRU Mall Tour, 4pm, 2/L
Jan. 21, Kim Chui Mall Tour, 4pm, 2/L
Jan. 28, Sugar Mercado Mall Tour, 4pm, 2/L
Tuesdays, Stand-Up Comedy @ Cuba Libre, 9pm
Fridays, Saturdays & Sundays, Live Band @ Cuba Libre, 9pm

METROPOLIS
ALABANG
850-4752

Jan. 20, Landscape Exhibit, 10am, 3/L
Jan. 21, Muntinlupa Dance Company Cultural Show, 4pm, 2/L
Jan. 27, Food Demo by Spices and Foodmix House, 2pm, 3/L
Jan. 28, Mojofly Mall Tour, 4pm, 2/L
Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, Live Band, 8pm, 2/L

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METROPOLIS ALABANG star
starmall LAS PIÑAS

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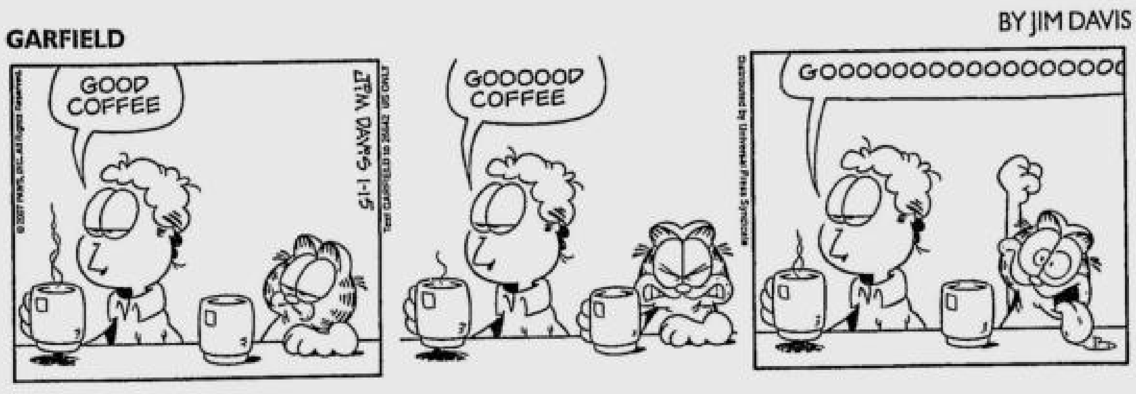
MONDAY, JANUARY 15, 2007

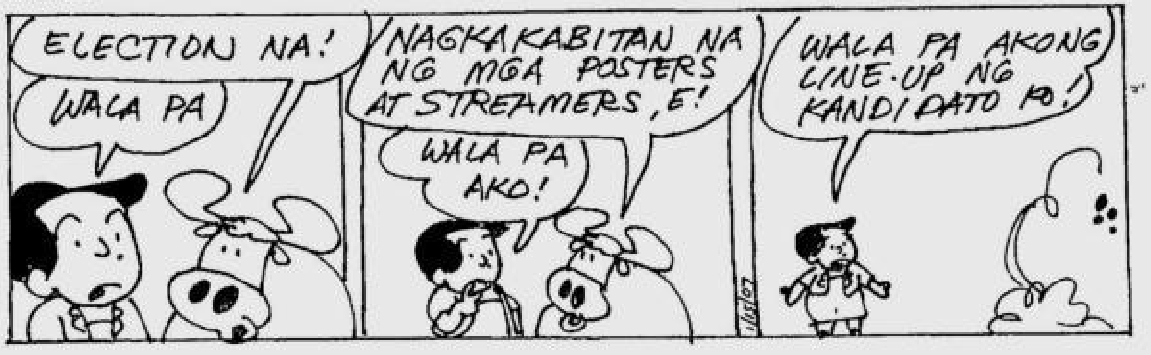
GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS


GOOD COFFEE
GOOOOOD COFFEE
GOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO
JPM DAVIS 1-15

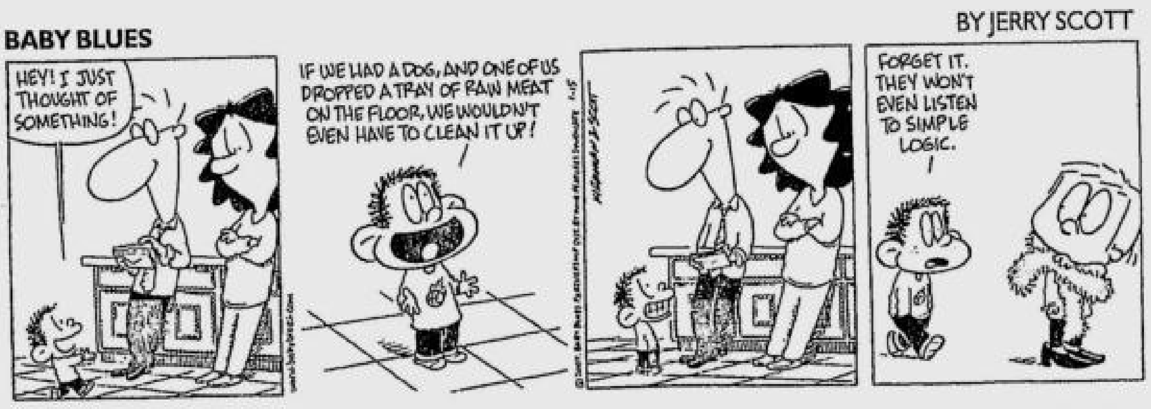
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


ELECTION NA!
WALA PA
NAGKAKABITAN NA NG MGA POSTERS AT STREAMERS, E!
WALA PA AKO!
WALA PA AKONG LINE-UP NG KANDIDATO KO!

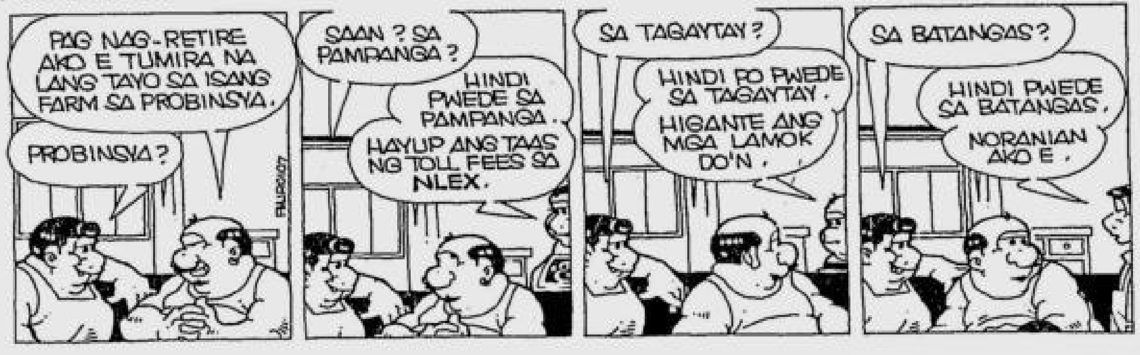
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


HEY! I JUST THOUGHT OF SOMETHING!
IF WE HAD A DOG, AND ONE OF US DROPPED A TRAY OF RAW MEAT ON THE FLOOR, WE WOULDN'T EVEN HAVE TO CLEAN IT UP!
FORGET IT. THEY WON'T EVEN LISTEN TO SIMPLE LOGIC.

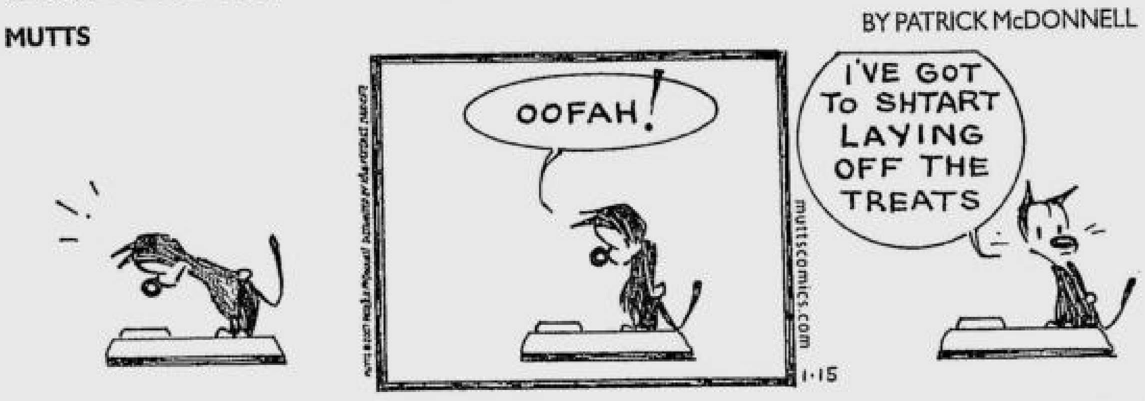
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


PAG NAG-RETIRE AKO E TUMIRA NA LANG TAYO SA ISANG FARM SA PROBINSYA.
PROBINSYA?
SAAN ? SA PAMPANGA ?
HINDI PWEDE SA PAMPANGA.
HAYUP ANG TAAS NG TOLL FEES SA NLEX.
SA TAGAYTAY ?
HINDI PO PWEDE SA TAGAYTAY.
HIGANTE ANG MGA LAMOK DO'N.
SA BATANGAS ?
HINDI PWEDE SA BATANGAS.
NORANIAN AKO E.

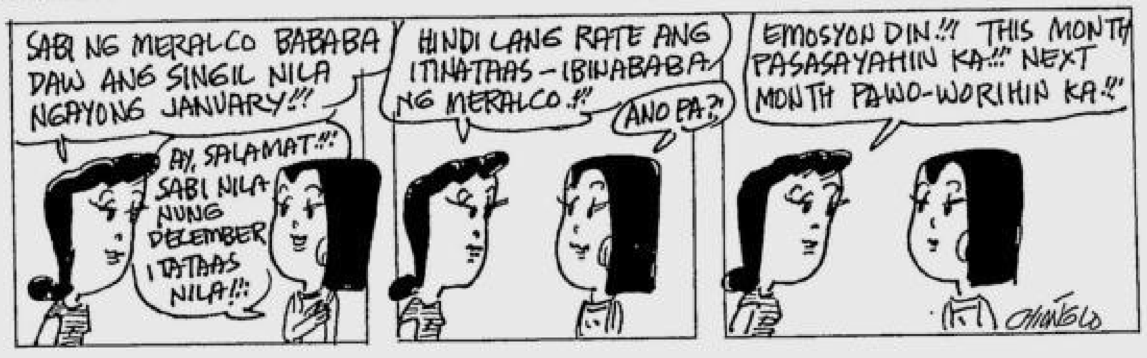
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


OOFAH!
I'VE GOT TO SHTART LAYING OFF THE TREATS
mutts comics.com
1-15

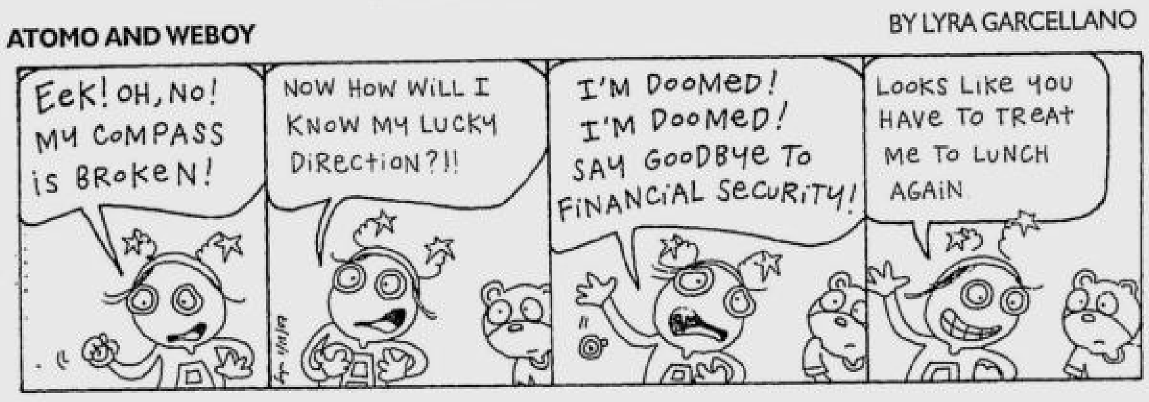
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


SABI NG MERALCO BABABA DAW ANG SINGIL NILA NGAYONG JANUARY!!!
AY, SALAMAT!!! SABI NILA NUNG DECEMBER ITATAAS NILA!!!
HINDI LANG RATE ANG ITINATAAS - IBINABABA NG MERALCO.!!
ANO PA?
EMOSYON DIN!!! THIS MONTH PASASAYAHIN KA!!! NEXT MONTH PAWO-WORIHIN KA!!
CHIONGLO

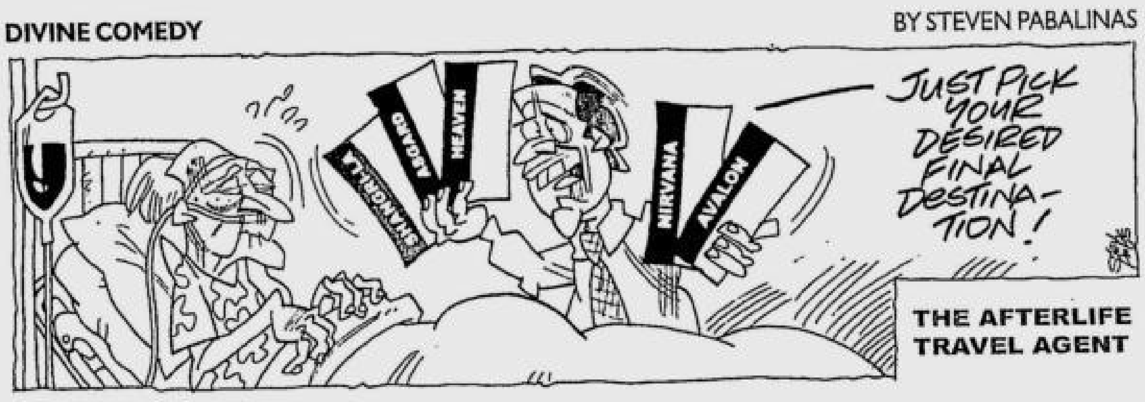
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Eek! OH, No! MY COMPASS is BROKEN!
NOW HOW WILL I KNOW MY LUCKY DIRECTION?!!
I'M DOOMED! I'M DOOMED! SAY GOODBYE TO FINANCIAL SECURITY!
LOOKS LIKE YOU HAVE TO TREAT ME TO LUNCH AGAIN

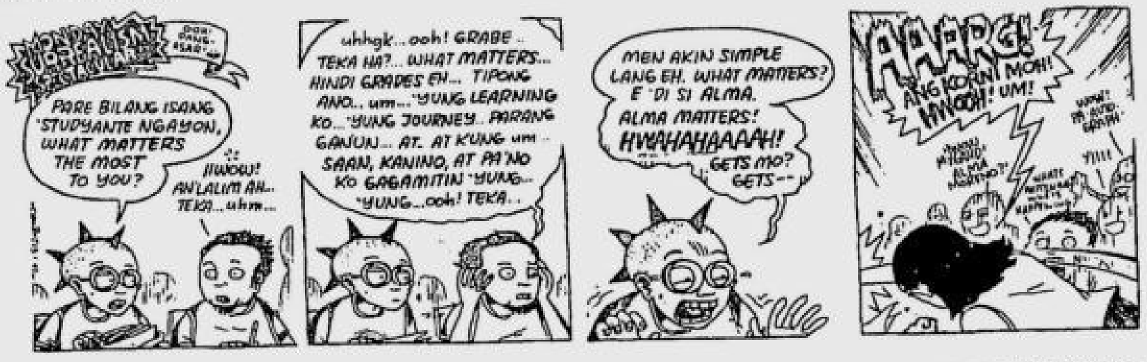
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


ARCADIA
HEAVEN
NIRVANA
AVALON
JUST PICK YOUR DESIRED FINAL DESTINATION!
THE AFTERLIFE TRAVEL AGENT

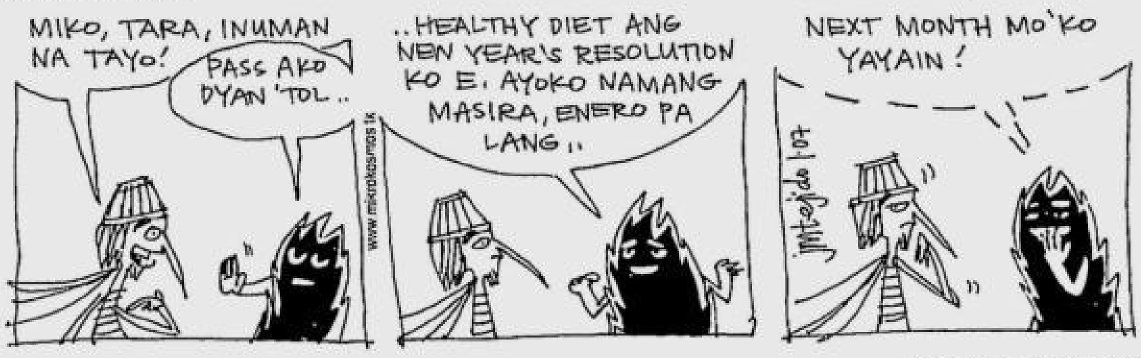
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


PARE BILANG ISANG 'STUDYANTE NGAYON, WHAT MATTERS THE MOST TO YOU?
IIWOW! AN'LALIM AH.. TEKA...uhm...
uhhgk...ooh! GRABE.. TEKA HA?... WHAT MATTERS... HINDI GRADES EH... TIPONG ANO... um...'YUNG LEARNING KO...'YUNG JOURNEY.. PARANG GANUN... AT.. AT KUNG um.. SAAN, KANINO, AT PA'NO KO GAGAMITIN 'YUNG.. 'YUNG...ooh! TEKA..
MEN AKIN SIMPLE LANG EH. WHAT MATTERS? E 'DI SI ALMA. ALMA MATTERS! HWAHAHAAAAH! GETS MO? GETS--
AAARG! ANG KORNI MOH! HWOOH! UM!
YIII!

MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO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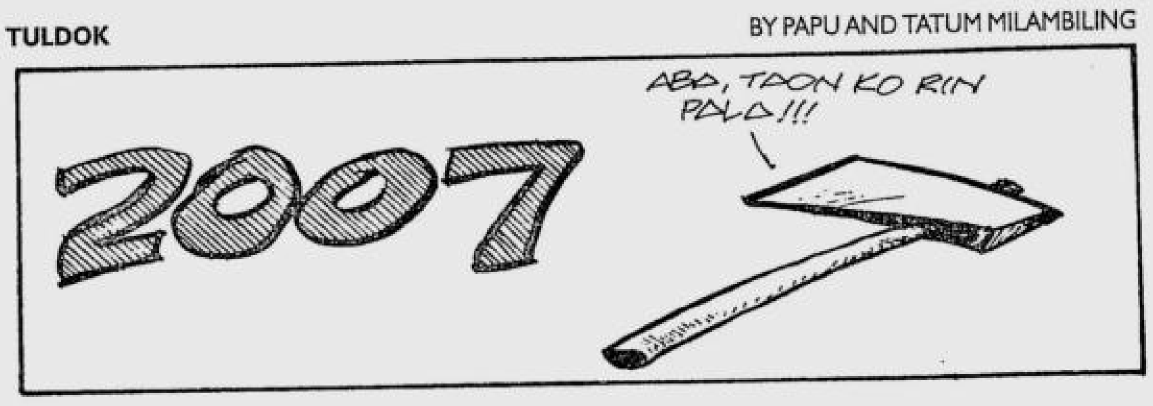
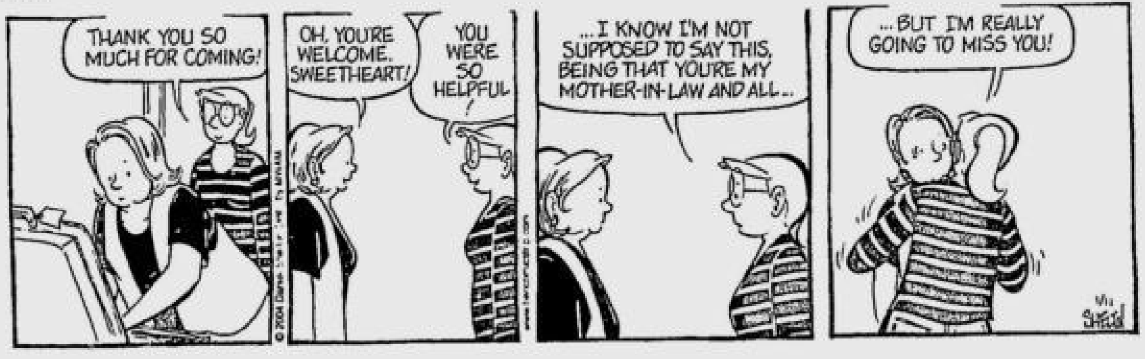
TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


ABA, TAON KO RIN PALA!!!
2007

BEN

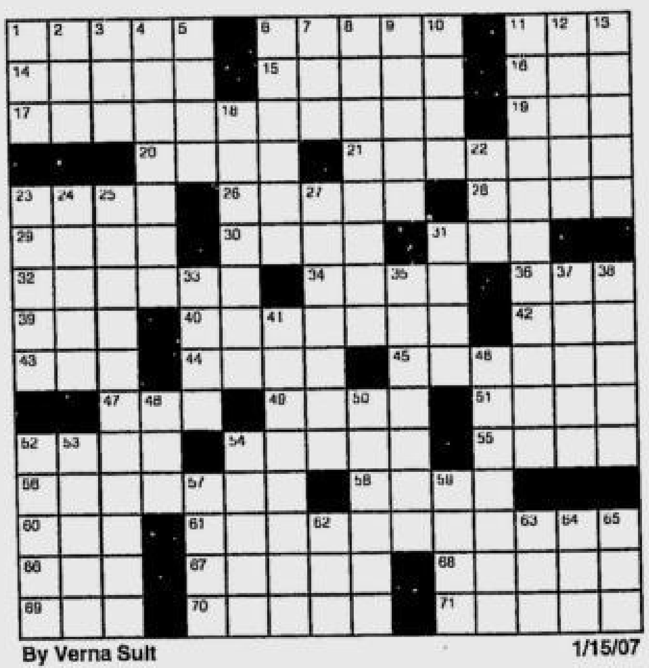
BY DANIEL SHELTON


THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR COMING!
OH, YOU'RE WELCOME, SWEETHEART!
YOU WERE SO HELPFUL!
...I KNOW I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO SAY THIS, BEING THAT YOU'RE MY MOTHER-IN-LAW AND ALL...
...BUT I'M REALLY GOING TO MISS YOU!

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Motel listings
6 Bookcase board
11 Plant holder
14 Designer Head
15 Float like a hummingbird
16 Mexican gold
17 Portuguese explorer
19 SE Asian war
20 Obey
21 Mr. Peanut's eyewear
23 Half a dolphin fish
26 Automobile type
28 Bandleader Arnaz
29 Writer Wister
30 Fulda feeder
31 Tack on
32 Park employee
34 Pretensions
36 Drop a fly, e.g.
39 Legendary Bruin
40 Pig out
42 Actor Marvin
43 Napoleon's commander at Waterloo
44 Untouchable Eliot
45 Entered
47 Suffers from
49 Scrabble piece
51 Top-notch
52 Close
54 Column style
55 Chew like a rat
56 Enters, as a stream
58 Hindu goddess
60 Promos
61 Norwegian explorer
66 Bossy bellow
67 Time and __
68 Explorer Polo
69 Traveler's rest
70 Reverberating instruments
71 Nirvana

DOWN
1 RPM word
2 Nabokov novel
3 "__ the season..."
4 Acid artwork
5 Sliding contact plate
6 Out of the sun
7 Table tyrant
8 Saint of actresses?
9 Clunker
10 Humorist Lebowitz
11 Spanish explorer
12 Doctoral hurdles
13 Marisa of "My Cousin Vinny"
18 Merit
22 Quirky
23 Numbskull
24 In the know
25 English explorer
27 Letter opener
31 Cinema pooch
33 Ages and ages
35 Palindromic vehicle
37 Queen of Spain
38 Extend a subscription
41 Tallinn resident
46 Enchanting
48 Broke bread
50 Compares
52 Turbaned teacher
53 Wore
54 Artist Rivera
57 Smelting waste
59 Natural swing support
62 High-fiber fruit
63 Indian honorific
64 ROTC relative
65 Discouraging words



By Verna Suit
Silver Spring, MD

1/15/07

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

I	N	S	I	D	E	J	O	B	■	R	A	S	P	S
T	O	P	B	A	N	A	N	A	■	A	R	T	E	L
A	N	A	L	G	E	S	I	C	■	S	C	A	R	E
L	O	M	E	■	R	O	C	K	■	C	E	N	S	E
■	■	■	■	A	G	N	E	S	■	A	D	D	U	P
C	H	A	N	E	Y	■	■	E	L	L	■	S	A	I
L	A	C	E	S	■	B	R	A	D	S	■	U	S	N
A	S	C	H	■	F	A	S	T	S	■	O	P	I	E
S	H	E	■	D	E	N	T	S	■	A	U	T	O	S
S	E	L	■	R	E	Q	■	■	A	N	I	O	N	S
I	S	E	R	E	■	U	N	I	T	Y	■	■	■	■
C	O	R	E	S	■	E	A	S	T	■	A	L	O	U
I	V	A	N	S	■	T	R	A	I	N	S	E	T	S
S	E	T	A	E	■	T	E	A	C	H	E	S	T	S
T	R	E	N	D	■	E	S	C	A	L	A	T	O	R

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1/15/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're an idealist. You believe in your cause. When you work so hard for your goals, others perceive you as heroic. You're fearless and brave in your pursuit of your own truth. Some of you are very social and pleasure-loving. All of you are rebellious and independent. You might choose increased solitude this year in order to learn something very important.

Birthdate of: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., civil-rights leader; Aristotle Onassis, business magnate; Mario Van Peebles, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Do something different today. Stir it up a little. Go someplace you've never been before. You're hungry for adventure, and you want to learn something completely new.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You feel quite intensely about everything today. Romance is also on your mind. Someone might give you a gift or do a favor for you today.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Conversations with partners and close friends are upbeat and enjoyable today. Get out and talk to others. Dealings with the public will be successful.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): This is a good day to wrap up loose details at work. Efficiency and effectiveness are tops on your list today. You want everything to work smoothly.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You're in a playful, flirtatious mood today! Make plans to see someone. Catch a movie or a game. Do something that is fun and enjoyable.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Conversations with parents might be significant today. In fact, discussions with family members could lead to a broader understanding about something. People feel open-minded and tolerant of each other.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): This is a busy day due to short trips, errands and conversations with everyone, especially siblings. It's a good day to sign contracts and agree to negotiations.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You might see ways to boost your income today. Similarly, you might also see ways to spend money. Both of these can profit you in the future.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): The Moon is in your sign today, making some lovely aspects to other planets. You feel good, upbeat, optimistic and friendly to everyone. Yay!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Work behind the scenes today if you can. Research will go well. In fact, secrets could come out. (Be discreet.) Treat this secret as you would hope others would treat yours.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Friendships are important to you today. In fact, you might feel protective or concerned about someone. Possibly, someone feels this way about you.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Be aware of your appearance and your actions today, because for some reason, everyone will notice you at some point. Forewarned is forearmed. Conversations with parents, bosses and VIPs might be significant.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

2			1					
		6	9	3	8	7		
	7	3				1	9	
1	4				7		3	
	5						2	
	6		3				4	1
	3	9				2	8	
		4	2	6	5	3		
					3			6

Difficulty Level ★

1/15

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

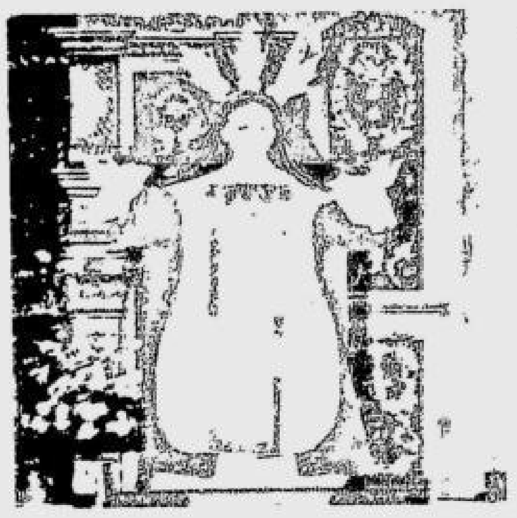
Answer to previous puzzle

1	7	4	3	6	2	9	8	5
9	8	6	1	4	5	2	7	3
5	3	2	7	8	9	4	1	6
3	5	9	2	7	6	8	4	1
8	2	7	4	1	3	6	5	9
4	6	1	9	5	8	7	3	2
7	4	5	6	2	1	3	9	8
6	1	3	8	9	4	5	2	7
2	9	8	5	3	7	1	6	4

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

1/14

TOTOY Bayabo; Donnie Delima; Mel Chionglo (treasurer); Jess Salgado; Nolie Hans (vice president);, Ogee Atos (president); Ben Farrales (founding chair), Dingdong Bautista; Germs Malabanan; Chito Ilagan; Rommel Elepaño; and Mario Buela. Back row: Steve de Leon; Art Borja; Venson Nobrera; Deo Pamilar; Rev. Fr. Leopoldo Jaucian, SVD; Rev. Fr. Alfredo Sabado; Manolo Estrella; Terry Layacan; Ricky Miranda; and Dennis Maturan



"THE NOMBRE," patron of Congregacion del Santissimo Nombre del Niño de Jesus

Fiesta del Sto. Nino 2007

THE CONGREGACION DEL SANTISIMO Nombre del Niño Jesus will celebrate this year's 28th anniversary feast with a vast exhibit of more than 400 images of the Sto. Niño at the PNB banking hall on Macapagal Avenue, climaxing with a grand procession of more than 200 beautifully decorated *carrozas* complete with colorful *ati-atihan* tribes and brass bands.

The exhibit opens Jan. 18 with a solemn Mass at 5 p.m. The exhibit, open from 9 a.m.-9 p.m., from Jan. 28, starts at 3 p.m. from the Philtrade grounds to the Luneta Grandstand. Registration of Sto. Niño images at the PNB banking hall is on Jan. 15-17, 9 a.m.-7 p.m.

This year's celebration will be led by the 2007 Hermanos Mayores, among those invited are Louie and Mellie Ablaza; Roberto and Marisse Baes; Mercy Balocating; Marivic-Ayala Camacho; Dr. Erwin and Dr. Arlene Carabeo; Reynaldo and Evelyn de Castro; Huan Yan and Norma Chan; Sam and Chita Chen; Imelda Cojuangco; Fe and Ed de Guia; Vicky Garcia; Adrian Gonzales Fabella and Bernardina Lucena vda. de Gonzales; Lydia Gregorio; William and Mila Haw; Nene Aguinaldo and Grace Jose; Renato and Vicky Magadia; Milagros Mangaliman; Dr. Jose Mendez; Arturo and Evangeline Orosco; Marietta Paredes; Richard Quiocho; Dr. Roberto and Cynthia Ramirez; Vivian M. Raneses; Johnny and Carol Rogge; Ernesto and Chi-Chi Salas; Marcosa Sanchez; Paulino and Nelly Tan; Jorge Allan Tengco; Ofelia Trinidad; and David and Cora Yu.

Ma. Kristin Nathalie C. Nell is *hermanita*.

The 2007 exhibit will be distinguished by its theme of universal love as exemplified by the Holy Child.

Providing the arc of this particular love and devotion, the Child Jesus elicited from devotees is a gallery of the Church's saints and martyrs, among them, St. Therese of Lisieux, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Felix C'antalice, St. Rose of Lima, St. John of the Cross, St. Veronica Guiliani.

The officers and board members of the Congregacion are Ben Farrales, founding chair; Jing Chua, chair of the board; Ricky Miranda, president; Chito Ilagan, vice president; Jesse Nell, secretary; Mel Chionglo, treasurer; Manolo Estrella, Steve de Leon, Nolie Hans and Germs Malabanan, board members.

100 years of beautiful music

From page D1

to inform residents that a piano teacher was now available at the Benedictine Sisters' Convent.

"That bell literally rang in the country's first school of music, and Sr. Baptista would go on to become the pioneer of formal music education in the country," a short history of the St. Scholastica's College (SSC) School of Music declares.

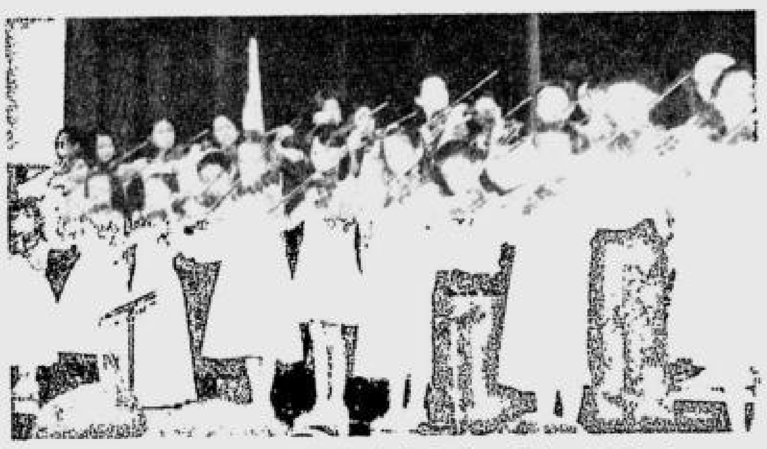
That school transferred from Tondo to San Marcelino and finally to its present location in Singalong, Manila, which was then "a snake-infested swampland."

It has long been an outstanding musical institution in the country, thanks to the legacy of Sr. Baptista who died in 1942 during the Japanese Occupation.

One of her students was National Artist Lucrecia R. Kasilag, who recalled that Sr. Baptista encouraged her to compose and "enrich your Philippine musical literature."

The SSC School of Music is now celebrating its centennial. At a recent press conference at SSC, dean Sr. Mary Placid, OSB, announced a yearlong series of musical activities to commemorate the founding of the school, and to pay tribute to its founder.

A mini-concert was staged during the presscon with performers representing three generations: violinist Jascha Obieta, 7, and soprano Marian Miguel, 22, (both talents accompanied on the piano by Greg Zuniega); and pianist Corazon Matero, 86! The latter attacked the keyboard with vigor, belying her years.



PREDIS kids based at St. Scholastica's College School of Music

MUSIC outreach project of St. Scholastica's in Dasmariñas, Cavite

The celebration starts on Jan. 28 with the ringing of the bells and the release of 100 balloons, among other felicitous events. February and March will see concert tours in Guagua, Pampanga, and Las Piñas respectively; and there will be a Helen Quach concert with the Manila Symphony Orchestra II in April.

In May a "Music for the People" concert will be staged, followed by concerts at both light rail terminals (LRT and MRT) in June. July is a "rest" month. In August a "100 Years of Music" exhibit will be launched, followed in September by the symbolic groundbreaking of the Sr. Baptista Battig Hall.

October, the month Sr. Baptista arrived in Manila, will be capped by the planting of 100 trees in Tanay, Rizal, and a *tertulia* (concert) featuring 100 voices and 100 fingers. The centennial draws to a close in November with a St. Cecilia's Concert.

Sr. Baptista once famously declared: "Great is my desire to see the dear children of the East rise in the musical world to the same level as those in the West."

Her dream has been followed, and her desire fulfilled.

Varsitarian history exhibit opens at UST Museum

THE UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS Museum of Arts and Sciences will open the exhibit "The Varsitarian at 80: The Struggle and the Glory of the Campus Press in the Philippines," on Jan. 16, 10:30 a.m.

The exhibit chronicles the history of The Varsitarian, the official student paper of UST and the oldest and most respected Catholic campus paper in the Philippines. The paper turns 79 tomorrow and the exhibit kicks off the celebration for its 80th anniversary in 2008.

Founded in 1928 by Jose Villa Panganiban, who would later head the National Language Institute and write the "Diksyunaryo-Tesauro Ingles-Pilipino," the Varsitarian has produced top journalists, writers, leaders and even National Artists (F. Sionil José, Bienvenido Lumbera, Daisy Hontiveros-Avellana, J. Elizalde Navarro).

It is the only campus paper to have an entry in the Cultural Center of the Philippines Encyclopedia for the Arts.

The exhibit is part of a broader series on the history of printing in the Philippines.

The 79th Varsitarian anniversary celebration will open with a Mass at 9 a.m., at the Civil Law lobby to be led by Varsitarian alumni-priests (Fr. Edd Lleva of the Diocese of Caloocan, Fr. Nicanor Lalog of the Diocese of Malolos, and Fr. Isidro Marinay of the Archdiocese of Manila).

The exhibit will be formally opened at 10:30 a.m., by UST Rector Magnificus Fr. Ernesto Arceo, OP.

At 12 noon, UST officials and Varsitarian staffers and alumni will formally inaugurate the new office of the paper at the UST Tan Yan Kee Student Center building.

The exhibit will run until Jan. 31. Call 4061611 loc. 8235 (Varsitarian office) or 7811815 (UST Museum).

Did you went here last week?
Yikes!

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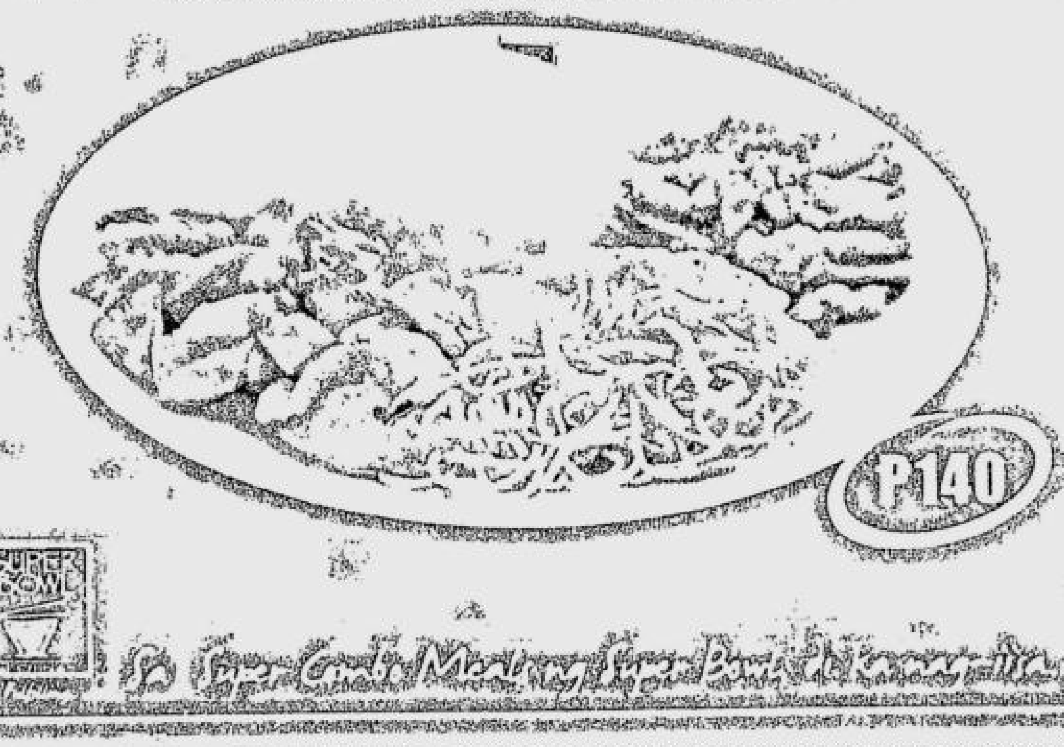
Para sa mga inindyan.

Wag magalala! May kasama [illegible] Super Bowl [illegible] Combo Meal.
May Kung Pao Chicken and Baguio Beans with Minced Pork [illegible]
Sa Super Bowl, salu-salo o solo-solo, [illegible]



SUPER BOWL
[illegible]

Sexy opening salvo for 2007

METRO MAGAZINE USHERS IN 2007 WITH ITS annual Body Issue featuring 13 of the hottest celebrities in town, including model and swimmer Enchong Dee, Miss Earth Priscilla Mireilles, DJ and Ms Hawaiian Tropic finalist Faith Amigo, basketball star Doug Kramer, actor Patrick Garcia, and model/interior designer Isabel Roces.

Photographed by Ronnie Salvacion, the 16-page spread was shot around the theme of birthstones.

On the cover is 1993 Miss Universe Dayanara Torres, who reveals how she has been coping since her divorce from singer Mark Anthony and why she considers the Philippines her second home.

In Talk, Metro rounds up women and asks them: "Are you ready to be single for life?"

Also read about skin-whitening injections, the hassle-free guide for the *balikbayan*, and fearless fashion forecasts for 2007.

Metro Magazine is published monthly by ABS-CBN Publishing and is available nationwide. For orders and subscriptions, call 4152272 local 4658.

THE INDEPENDENT WOMAN
METRO
SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE!
DEC 2006 JAN 2007
ANNUAL BESTSELLER!
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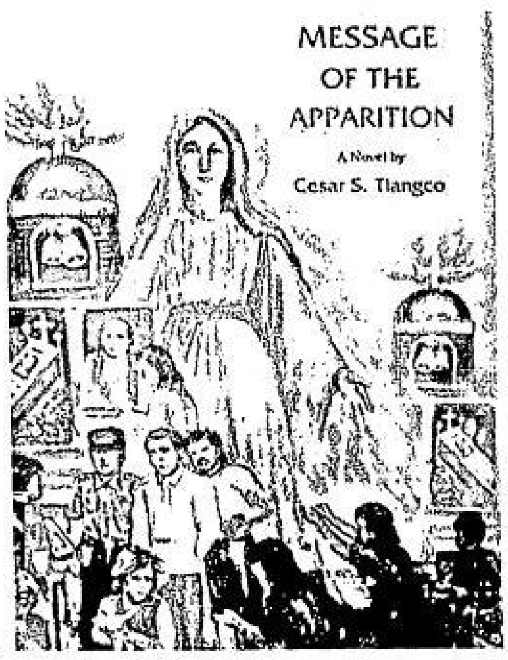
'DEPRESSION? ABSOLUTELY'
METALLIC, POP ART MANIA, THE ULTRA MINI:
SKIN WHITENING INJECTIONS
ULTIMATE BALIKBAYAN GUIDE TO THE CITY
BEST PARTY DRESSES—AND WHERE TO GET THEM
ARE YOU READY TO BE SINGLE FOR LIFE?

Novel on apparition to be launched

CAN FICTION DEAL WITH MIRACLES, SAY, the apparition of the Virgin Mary, and stay believable, and become an exemplar of what is known as truth in literature? Does it make sense to question the reality of miracles if we see them working on the lives of real people? Is the Blessed Mother's Apparition just a wanton creation of people who must have it to sustain an inconstant faith, or is the Apparition not anything we have to create because it is always deep within us?

When the late Cesar S. Tiangco was in his 80s, retired after having served for decades as principal of Muntinlupa National High School and of Rizal High School in Pasig, the world's biggest high school in terms of enrollment, he began writing a novel. He had been teacher and principal, but all along he had been writing fiction—short stories, a number of which were published by the Philippines Free Press.



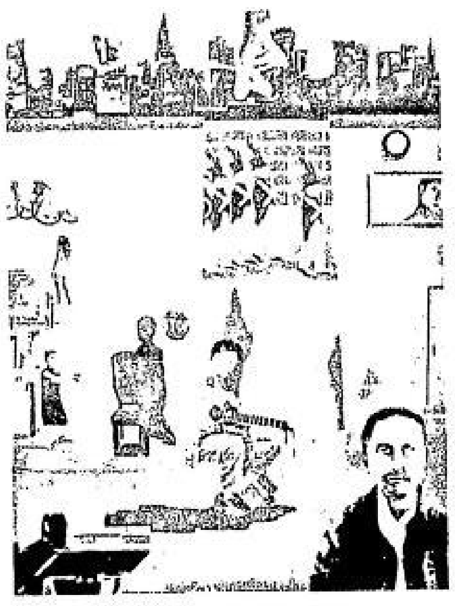
One of his stories was chosen by Asiaweek Magazine as one of the finest stories in its annual selections. His novel "Message of the Apparition," set in a small town, quite probably in his native Rizal province, tells the individual stories of a wide cast of characters living out their lives—of poverty, misery, crime and corruption—religious folk who are at the same time devout and superstitious, a priest who died foretelling that the Blessed Mother will come as an Apparition and an incumbent priest who must preside over its advent—and at the final moment finding their redemption in the apparition right there in the old church.

"Message of the Apparition" will be launched Jan. 21, very close to the author's first death anniversary, by the family of Tiangco and former students of his, at the gymnasium of the old Muntinlupa High School, now Muntinlupa National High School, which Mr. Tiangco, upon the request of the late Bureau of Prisons directors Eriberto B. Misa Sr. and Dr. Alfredo M. Bunye Sr., put up right after Liberation, in August 1945. Bunye's son, Presidential Spokesperson and Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunye, wrote the foreword to the novel of his late teacher and school principal.

"Mr. Tiangco captures through his work the various degrees of faith, or lack of it, among the characters: the church lay leaders, penitents, sweepstakes ticket vendor, town mayor, postman and the more discerning crusading newspaper editor. He graphically portrays the social problems which we have had for generations: patronage politics, illegal gambling, usury, petty corruption. He describes the gigantic battles fought by the central character, Father Antonio, and before that, his predecessor, Father Damian, against worldly temptation. On his deathbed, Father Damian foretold the apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary which was revealed to him in his dream," Secretary Bunye said.

This is a story of a people's faith, which sometimes wavers, but always finds its home in the Blessed Mother. Dr. Lucia B. Tiangco, the author's youngest daughter, said: "It was Mr. Tiangco's fondest hope to have his novel published. He thought that it has a good story and is about people he cared about, their weaknesses and foibles, and also their simple all-out trust in the Blessed Mother."

Publisher is Context Communication International Inc. E-mail rpv@virtusio.com. Call 7265130, 6315421 or 6413956.

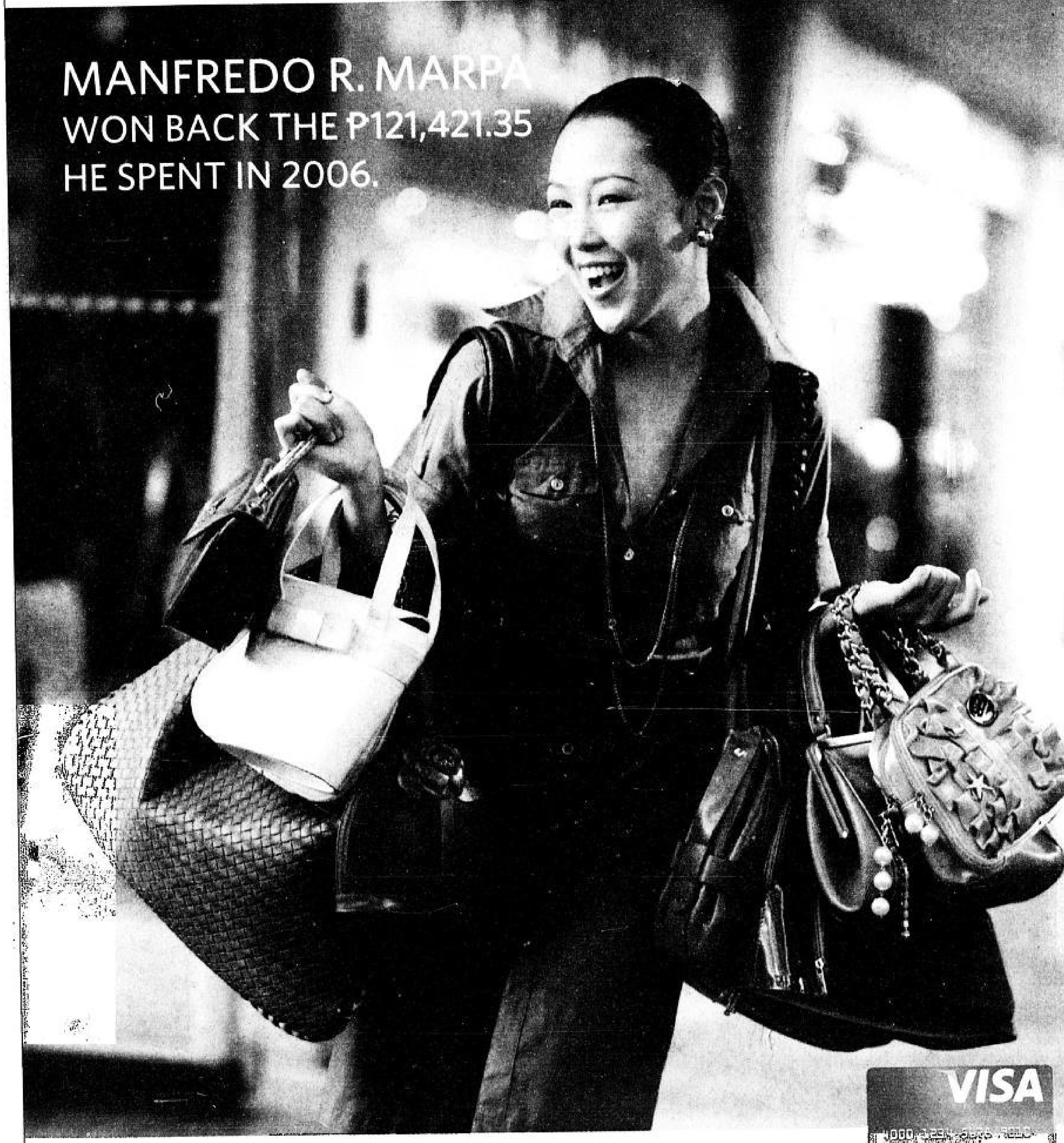

"SEASONS of Transitions"

'Escape' artist

"ESCAPE," AN ART EXHIBITION of ultra-modern paintings by 19-year-old expressionist Buen Abrigo, opens Jan. 17 at e gallerie (9153840), Serendra, Fort Global City, Taguig.

Highly adept in art appropriation, Abrigo, a consistent PLDT, Metrobank and Shell Art Awards finalist, creates graphic collages by lifting various images from different cultural contexts and juxtaposing them in a new environment. He fires them up with new life, giving them new significance in the process. The result, at first glance, appears to be a random amalgam of historical and fictional elements on canvas. Fragments of people, animals, objects and even alien creatures are depicted whimsically alongside each other.

His artworks are very bold and provocative with titles such as "Kate Spade Super Knock-Out," "Terrorizing Teddy" and "Carpaccio's Dogs." That, along with a mix of realism and the surreal, adds an intriguing appeal to his works, evidence of a bright, young and rebellious mind at work.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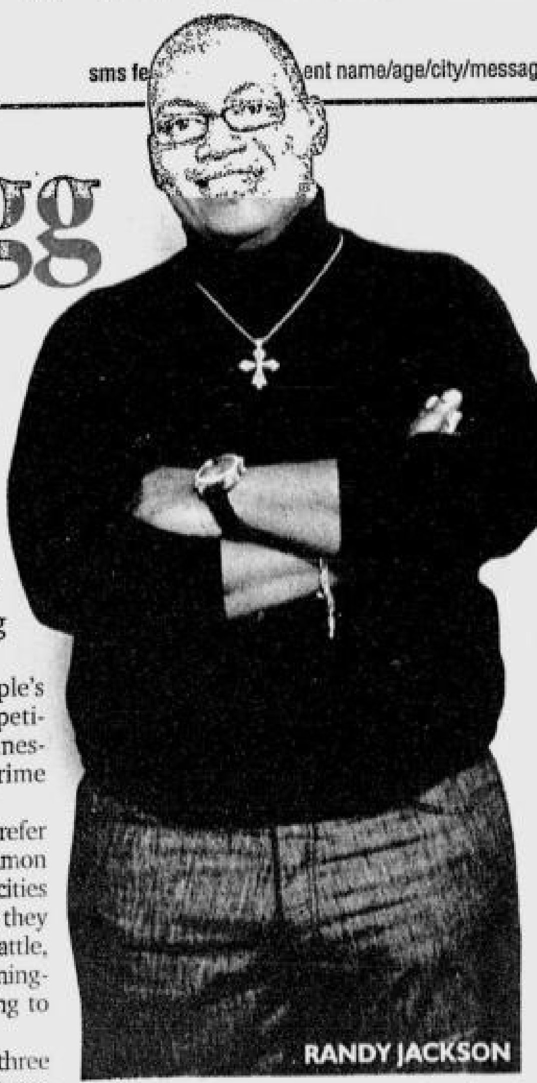
ENTERTAINMENT

Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**
sms fe… ent name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) and 283 (Smart) **or email us at** pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph

New 'dogg pound' on its way

By Kathryn Fatima Reyes



RANDY JACKSON

RANDY JACKSON LOOKS forward to the new "dogg pound."

This year's "American Idol," 2006 People's Choice awardee for Best Reality TV Competition Show starts its sixth edition on Wednesday (on Star World, 6 p.m. live; 8 p.m. prime time; and 11:30 p.m. late night replay).

Jackson—who coined "dogg pound" to refer to "Idol" semifinalists—and fellow judges Simon Cowell and Paula Abdul scoured seven US cities during this season's auditions. Jackson says they spent two days in each of these cities—Seattle, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Memphis, Birmingham, New York and San Antonio—listening to about 200 hopefuls daily.

Said to be the "most reasonable" of the three judges, Jackson reveals in this exclusive interview that the upcoming "AI" will have more rockers like Constantine Maroulis, Bo Bice and Chris Daughtry ... and a lot of Taylor Hicks types!

Jackson says he has spoken with Mariah Carey about the possibility of her guesting on the show.

(Last week on the Internet, it was also reported that former Beatle Paul McCartney is being courted by the producers to participate in the new season.)

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

Every year, they add a few tweaks to the show. Anything new this year that we can expect?

I'm going to wear more yellow and lime green in honor of Gnarls Barclay. I'm going to come dressed like a Jedi every week like Gnarls Barclay. No. We have a few things that we change, but I think the formula is pretty much what it is. I mean, you'll see a couple of wrinkles here and there, but of course, I can't tell you what [exactly].

Simon is going to dye his hair red.

And you're going to dress in lime green?

No. I think now, since I was going to do the Jedi thing like Gnarls Barclay, I think I'm going to do something different. I think I'm going to come in scrubs. I'm the new McDreamy.

The success of the show continues to surprise people every year. It just keeps getting bigger and bigger. What would have to happen for the show to suddenly not be as successful as it was the year before?

This is the greatest music talent show ever, right? I know that I, Simon, and Paula—we never really think about the ratings. I think we just go out and kind of do what we do. There's an abundance of talent in America and there will never be not a lot of talent out there.

I mean, you see what's happening to Jennifer Hudson, who didn't even win that year (2004); that tells you right there that there *is* a lot of great talent around. This is about finding it. The show will be successful as long as we go out and find great talent. I don't know what the numbers are going to be each year. I don't even think about that really, because to me "American Idol" is a search for the next superstar. It's not a search for the next ratings boost.

Have you ran into Jennifer Hudson since "Dreamgirls"?

Yes. I went to the "Dreamgirls" premier here in LA and talked to her for quite a long time, and then I saw her at a dinner, the Carousel of Hope Ball here in LA, that was honoring Clive Davis and, Quincy Jones. Again, we talked for a long time.

Did she ask for advice?

No, but she did say, "Thank you for making me your wildcard pick." She was my wildcard pick that year.

I just say to all of them, "Make sure you make the right record." That's what it's all about. We talk about it on the show and we get a lot of flack from it on the show, but it's all about great songs on the show, great songs after the show. That's what makes hit records, great songs.

How do you explain Jennifer Hudson losing on "American Idol" and now blowing away

NEW DOGG/ E2

FEEDBACK

From Moli (molichild@hotmail.com) 844 Crittenden St., NE Washington D.C. 20017:

I notice that many actors in the Philippines endorse liquor and even cigarettes. In India, actors are not allowed to do that. Why can't we follow this same guideline? Here in the United States, athletes do not endorse alcohol, either, since doing so would obviously send the wrong signal to their fans. Celebrities should be promoting good health.

DID YOU KNOW...

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA—BRAVO SAYS IT IS MAKING A TV SERIES ABOUT PAULA Abdul. "Hey, Paula" will follow Abdul, 44, as she films a new season of Fox's "American Idol," works on "Bratz: The Movie" and develops her own cosmetics line. The pop culture network, GE's NBC cable unit, has hits with "Project Runway" and "Top Chef," and has announced that the upcoming fifth season of "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" will be its last. *AP*

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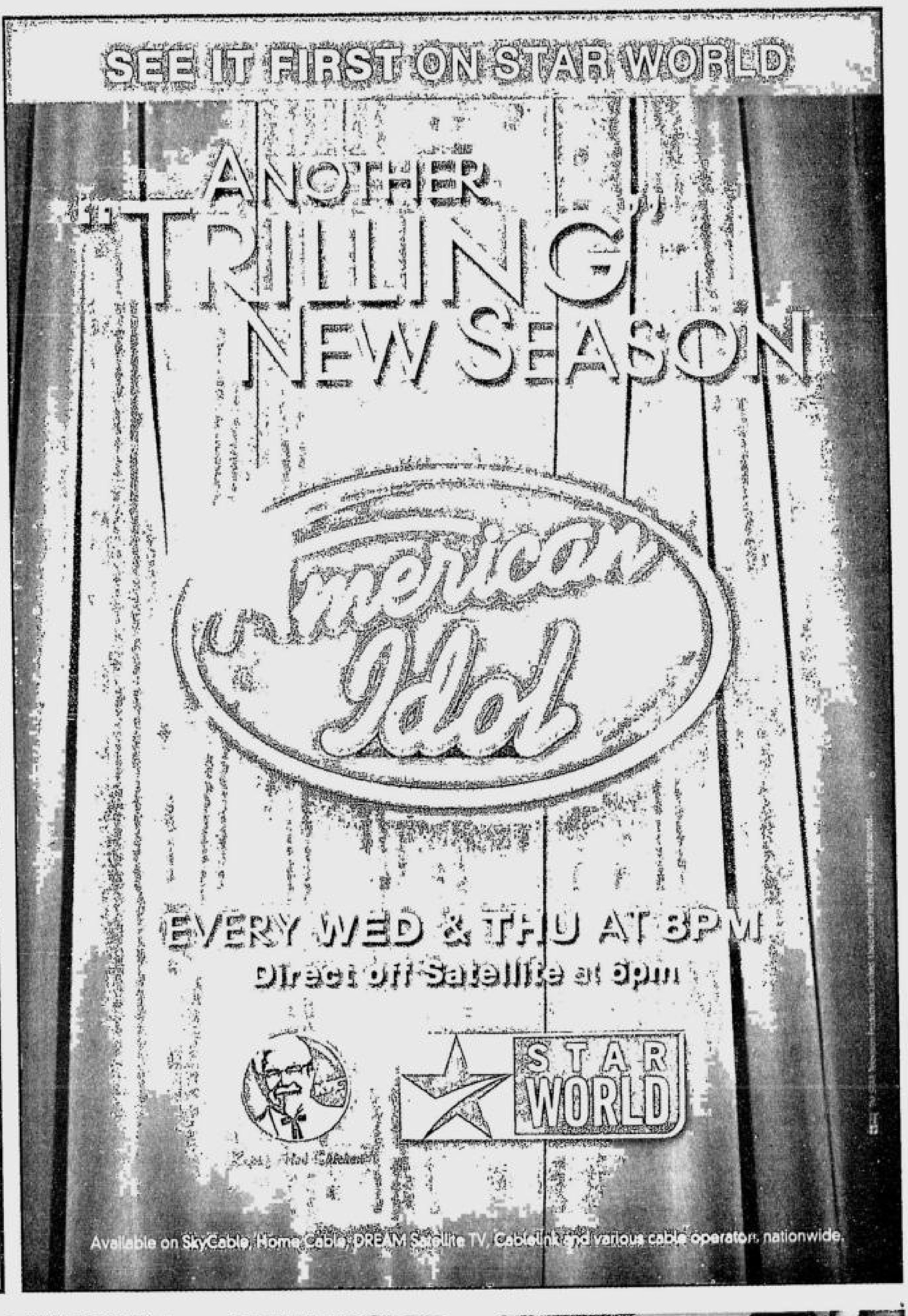

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6th floor Shangri-la Plaza EDSA corner Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City
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2 (DOLBY) ROB-B-HOOD
3 (DOLBY) BLOOD DIAMOND
4 (DOLBY) NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
PREMIERE
(DOLBY) GRIFFIN & PHOENIX

Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216
1 ERAGON
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 ROB-B-HOOD

Starmall EDSA-Shaw
(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266150
3 ENTENG KABISOTE - 3
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) ERAGON
5 RESRVED

Metropolis Star Cinema
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(ALABANG) tel. 8504288, 8433594
1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
2 ROB-B-HOOD
3 ERAGON
4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

THEATRES
NE Pacific Mall Cabanatuan
1 ERAGON
2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 ENTENG KABISOTE - 3

PACIFIC MALL LUCENA CINEMAGIC
Pacific Mall Lucena Tel (042) 660-5271
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
ERAGON
RESRVED
RESRVED

Filinvest Festival Cinema
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72
1 SHAKE, RATTLE, & ROLL - 8
2 ERAGON
3 (DTS) BLOOD DIAMOND
4 ERAGON
5 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
6 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
7 ROB-B-HOOD
8 MANO PO - 5
9 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
10 ENTENG KABISOTE - 3

Blue Wave
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927
1 (DOLBY) KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
2 (DOLBY) NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 (DOLBY) ERAGON
4 (DOLBY) RESERVED

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
tel 7334228
1 (DOLBY) ROB-B-HOOD
2 ERAGON
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
5 ENTENG KABISOTE - 3

MARKETPLACE
Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856
1 ERAGON
2 ENTENG KABISOTE - 3
3 KAMASUTRA - 3
4 LIGALIG (BATANG MAYNILA)

Marsagana Cinema
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274
1 ROB-B-HOOD
2 ERAGON
3 ENTENG KABISOTE - 3

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)
1 ERAGON
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 ERAGON
3 (DTS) BLOOD DIAMOND
4 ROB-B-HOOD

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 SUPER NOYPI
2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

Eastwood Cinemas
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City) tel 687.6963 or 72
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2 (DOLBY) ERAGON
3 (DOLBY) BLOOD DIAMOND
4 (DOLBY) GRIFFIN & PHOENIX

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Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
2 (DTS) NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 (DOLBY) ERAGON
4

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel. (049) 4111146
1 RESERVED
2 (DOLBY) RESERVED
3 (DTS) RESERVED
4 RESERVED

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 ENTENG KABISOTE - 3
2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 (DOLBY) MATAKOT KA SA KARMA

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
2 ZSA ZSA ZATURNNAH
3 (DOLBY) ENTENG KABISOTE - 3
4 (DTS) ERAGON

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320
1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL
2 ENTENG KABISOTE - 3
3 (DOLBY) KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
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1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748
1 LIGALIG (BATANG MAYNILA)
2 MANO PO -5

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
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2 GRO
3 UNANG TIKIM
4 (DTS) MATAKOT KA SA KARMA

Lianas MovieCity
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1 (DOLBY) ENTENG KABISOTE - 3
2 BED TIME STORY
3 (DTS) R^B-B-HOOD
4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
5 ERAGON

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 ROB-B-HOOD
2 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL - 8
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 ERAGON

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
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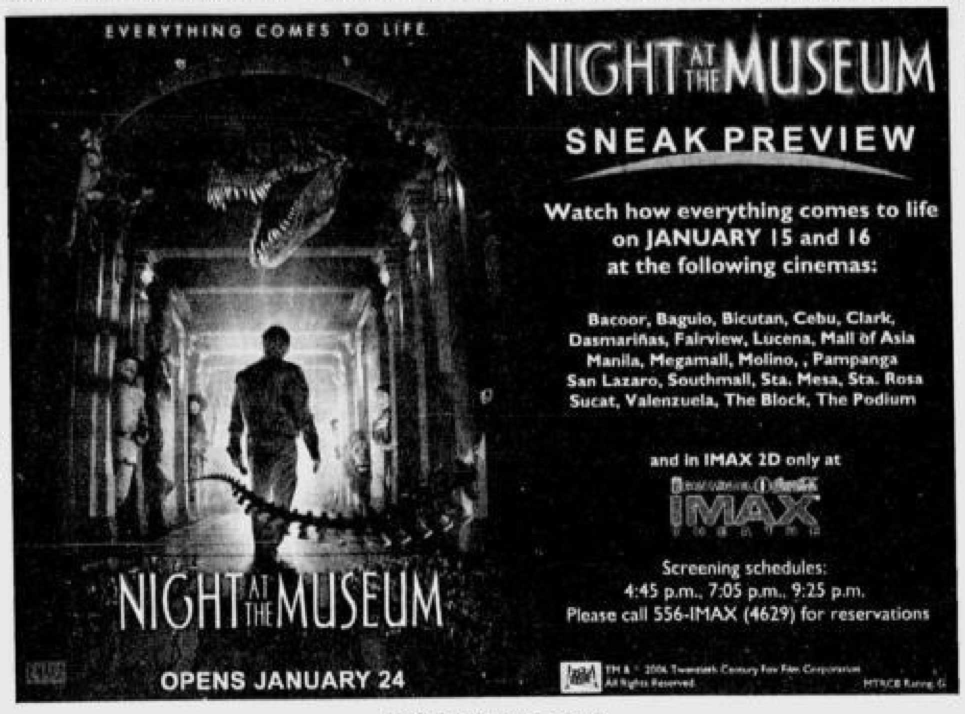

NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
SNEAK PREVIEW

Watch how everything comes to life on JANUARY 15 and 16 at the following cinemas:

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OPENS JANUARY 24

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4:45PM 7:05PM 9:25PM
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T-REX IN 3D
2:15PM 3:00PM Admission Fee P200
SANTA VS THE SNOWMAN
1:00PM
Matinee Fee- P200 Primetime Fee- P250
1 BLOOD DIAMOND
2 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
5 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
PREMIERE CINEMA
KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
CENTERSTAGE
ERAGON

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CINEMA 1
BLOOD DIAMOND
CINEMA 2
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
633-8976

SM NORTH EDSA 929-5452
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 MANO PO 5
3 ERAGON
4 BLOOD DIAMOND
5 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
6 ROB-B-HOOD
7 ERAGON
8 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
9 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
10 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
11 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
12 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

SM MEGACINEMA 633-1901
1 ERAGON
2 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 BLOOD DIAMOND
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
6 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
7 AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH
8 MANO PO 5
9 ROB-B-HOOD
10 ERAGON
11 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
12 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA

SM CITY FAIRVIEW 935-0749
1 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
2 MANO PO 5
3 ERAGON
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
6 ROB-B-HOOD
7 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
8 ERAGON
9 BLOOD DIAMOND
10 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
11 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
12 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA

SM CITY STA. MESA 716-1416
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 BLOOD DIAMOND
3 ERAGON
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 ROB-B-HOOD
6 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
7 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
8 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
9 MANO PO 5
10 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8

SM CITY SAN LAZARO 786-2488
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 ERAGON
3 BLOOD DIAMOND
4 ROB-B-HOOD
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

SM SOUTHMALL 806-6888
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 ERAGON
3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 BLOOD DIAMOND
5 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
7 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
8 ERAGON
9 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8

SM CITY BICUTAN 776-3055
1 ERAGON
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 BLOOD DIAMOND

SM CITY MANILA 523-9240
1 BLOOD DIAMOND
2 ROB-B-HOOD
3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
4 ERAGON
5 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
6 ERAGON
7 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
8 MATAKOT KA SA KARMA
9 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
10 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
11 MANO PO 5
12 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX

SM CITY DASMARINAS (046)4333201-04
1 ERAGON
2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

SM VALENZUELA 293-3917
1 ERAGON
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

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1 ROB-B-HOOD
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 ERAGON
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

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2 BLOOD DIAMOND
3 ERAGON
4 ROB-B-HOOD
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
7 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
8 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX

SM CITY CLARK (045)625-5844-45
1 ERAGON
2 ROB-B-HOOD
3 BLOOD DIAMOND
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
6 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

SM CITY MARILAO (044)9332013-17
1 ERAGON
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 ROB-B-HOOD

LUZON

SM CITY BATANGAS 885-6401-04
1 ERAGON
2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8

SM CITY PAMPANGA (045)9637681-85
1 ERAGON
2 BLOOD DIAMOND
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 ROB-B-HOOD
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

SM CIY LIPA (043) 756-7925
1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 ERAGON
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 ROB-B-HOOD

SM CITY LUCENA (042)7108977-80
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 MANO PO 5
3 ERAGON
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

SM CITY BAGUIO (074)6197838-39
1 ERAGON
2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

SM SUPERCENTER MOLINO (046)474-3160
1 ERAGON
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

SM CITY STA. ROSA (049)5341265-66
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 ROB-B-HOOD
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 ERAGON

SM CITY CEBU (032)231-3876
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 ERAGON
3 BLOOD DIAMOND
4 ROB-B-HOOD
5 FEAST
6 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8
7 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
8 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

VISAYAS MINDANAO

SM CITY ILOILO (033)3209422
1 THE RETURN
2 AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
5 RESERVED
6 ERAGON
7 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS
8 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 8

SM CITY DAVAO (082)2976998
1 ERAGON
2 THE RETURN
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 BOA
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
6 ROB-B-HOOD

SM CITY CAGAYAN (088)859-2884
1 ERAGON
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 FEAST

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SIMON Cowell, Ryan Seacrest, Jackson and Paula Abdul

New 'dogg pound' …

From page E1

Beyonce in "Dreamgirls"?

Personally, I don't think she blows away Beyonce in "Dreamgirls." I think [Jennifer is] amazing in "Dreamgirls" [but] I think Jennifer Holiday, who originally sang the song, was… more amazing. It's harder to be the original, than to be the second or the third. I think [Jennifer has] done amazingly well, but I remind people every time: The girl that won, her name was Fantasia Barrino and if you want to know why she won, go back and listen to her [rendition of] "Summertime." It's the best "Idol" performance to date. That's why she won.

The irony is that, in "Dreamgirls," she plays someone who has an amazing voice, but is bounced because she doesn't have the looks and the charisma of the others. Some people thought that's what happened in "American Idol," too—that she had an amazing voice, maybe one of the best ever, but that she just, for whatever reason … I don't know … looks, charisma, was bounced sooner than she should have been.

How do you feel about that?

I think she *was* bounced sooner than she should have been. But if you remember that season, and it's hard for people to go back and think about it; people don't even remember that she was my wildcard pick. We had our own "Dreamgirls" that season. We had LaToya (London), Jennifer Hudson and Fantasia Barrino. So it was just going to be, who was the best singer at that time.

Fortunately for Fantasia, as I said, her "Summertime" is the only [performance] on "Idol" that season that gave me goose bumps. She blew that out. She deserved to win that season. I mean, look, you saw Ruben (Studdard, 2003) win. It's not about weight. It's not about looks.

Do you mind having guest judges?

I could definitely live without them. The show works because of the three of us on the panel, and what we do, and how we interact. I don't think we need guest judges. I think when people come into the arena that we judge in, it's often a little awkward and a little hard for them. I think people look at the show as a fan and go, "I could do that. I'd love to be there." It's almost like saying I could be a pitcher. Actually, I couldn't. I don't even know if I could pitch little league. I mean, [maybe] … you could do it, but is it going to be great or are you just there for the TV face time?

You were quoted as saying on Entertainment Weekly that you're going to call up Mariah Carey and ask her to … mentor the kids and sing on the show. Is that going to happen?

I don't know. I've been thinking about it. We've tossed it around a bit. I think she'd be great because, for me, she and Whitney and Celine are the three great divas, I mean some of the better singers of our time.

Have you talked with Mariah about it?

I mentioned it to her. We'll see. You've got to stay tuned on that one.

She was open to it?

Yes. I mean, definitely. So we'll see what happens.

We're looking forward to seeing all of the horrible, horrible, horrible singers this time. We don't care about the good ones.

You sound like Simon Cowell.

Give us an idea … who is everyone going to be talking about; how bad is he or she?

Every season, there's a number of those. You're going to have to

---

MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13 | Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult

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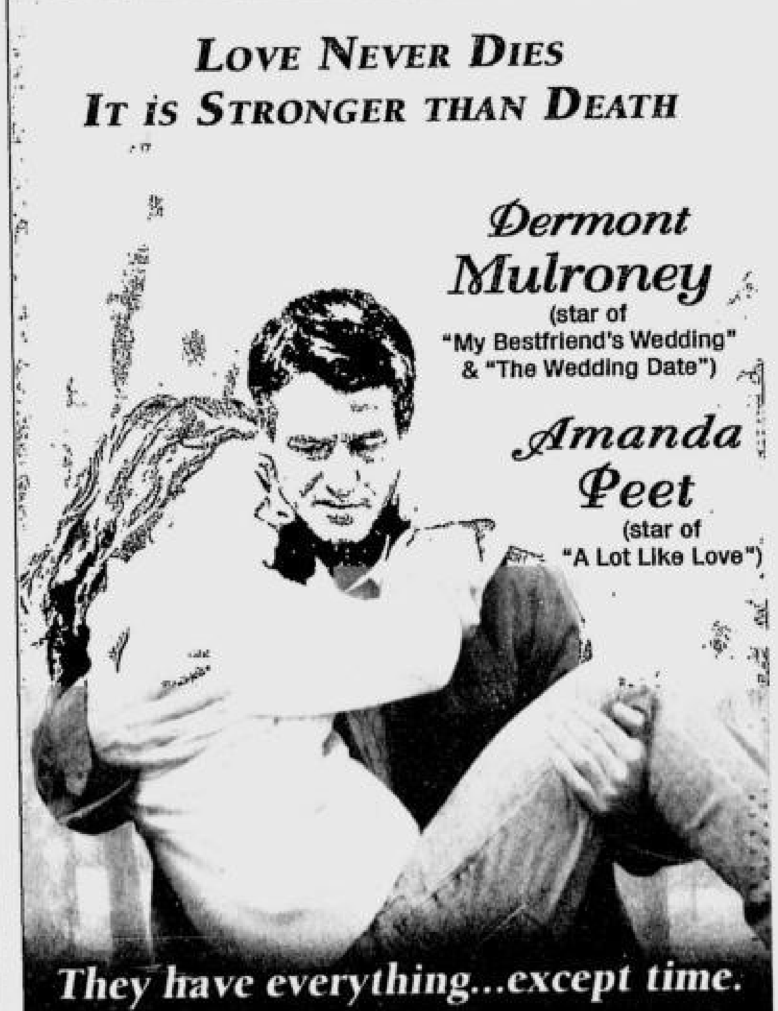

Dermont Mulroney
(star of "My Bestfriend's Wedding" & "The Wedding Date")
Amanda Peet
(star of "A Lot Like Love")
They have everything...except time.
Griffin & Phoenix

'I don't think we need guest judges. When [other] people come into that arena, it's often a little awkward and hard for them'

judge this for yourself. I'm telling you, wonders never cease.

Do you like those guys, or do you think they're just wasting your time?

I think … for the first five seconds … You think it's funny. You're laughing. Then you go, "Okay, what is this?" People watch this show from year to year. You've seen Kelly Clarkson. She's great. Fantasia, Clay (Aiken), Ruben, now Jennifer Hudson, Carrie Underwood, Katharine McPhee, Taylor Hicks. These people are great.

Then those people show up and they're really horrible. You go, "Something must be really wrong with their hearing." Then you start thinking, maybe they have me and Simon confused.

Any standouts so far, good contestants? People have been saying there's no apparent front runner, no Carrie or Fantasia this year. Is that true?

I think what's going to happen this year is Simon and I have been saying it's more like Season One. I think it's going to be somebody that grows during the competition, someone who can really stand there and take it, show up every week and be amazing.

Last year there was a lot of personality among the finalists, like Chris Daughtry, Kelly Pickler. How big a part of the formula is that?

The public actually picks these people to put them in the finals. We do the auditions, but the public eliminates them. Definitely, personality plays a huge part. The three qualities I look for are unbelievable, unique talent, and some sense of star potential, if you will. That means some great personality, something that's going to engage people and also that confidence, that really eye-of-the-tiger kind of persistence.

Elvis had all of that. If you think of whomever you love—Sinatra, Nat King Cole, Prince—they had all of those things. That's what makes a superstar.

What's the advice that contestants most ignore, and that you wish they wouldn't?

Song choice, song choice, song choice. Understand who you are, because what you tell me as a judge when you sing a song that's way too big for you, you tell me you have no idea how good you are and what you sing best, so you just told me you have no idea what you're doing. I'm going to imagine that almost every time you're going to pick the wrong song for you.

How are all of the judges getting along this season?

Fantastically, interestingly well.

You and Paula, you and Simon, everyone good?

Yes. Listen, it's always interesting because we don't see each other for a while and then we get back together and do the show. It's always a little bit of a readjusting period and we go a little crazy on each other sometimes, but we each call each other crazy four or five times. That's okay. It's brothers and sisters.

Of the people who have been on the show, winners or not, do you have a favorite?

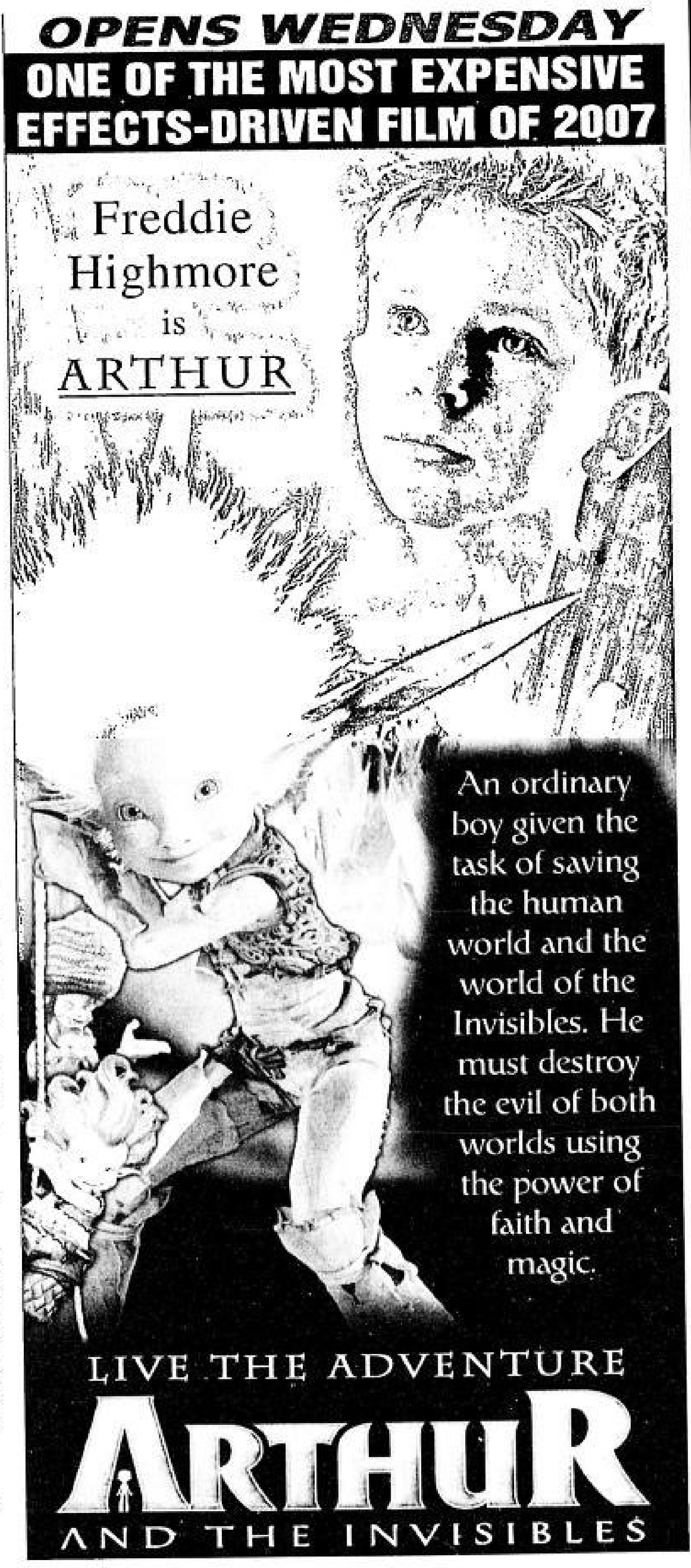
My two favorites, hands down, are Kelly Clarkson and Fantasia.

Are you in touch with either one of them?

I see them from time to time. Fantasia sang a duet on the Sam Moore album that I produced about six months ago. Those two girls' voices are amazing, and I'm really pleased and happy about what's happened with Jennifer Hudson.

If you were in charge, rather than the voting audience, is there any winner you would have changed?

No. I think the public has gotten it right every time. I believe in America.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Freddie Highmore is ARTHUR
An ordinary boy given the task of saving the human world and the world of the Invisibles. He must destroy the evil of both worlds using the power of faith and magic.
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ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES

NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

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12:20 R4 / 1:40 / 4:00 / 6:20 / 8:40

KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
11:55 / 2:05 / 4:15 / 6:25 / 8:35

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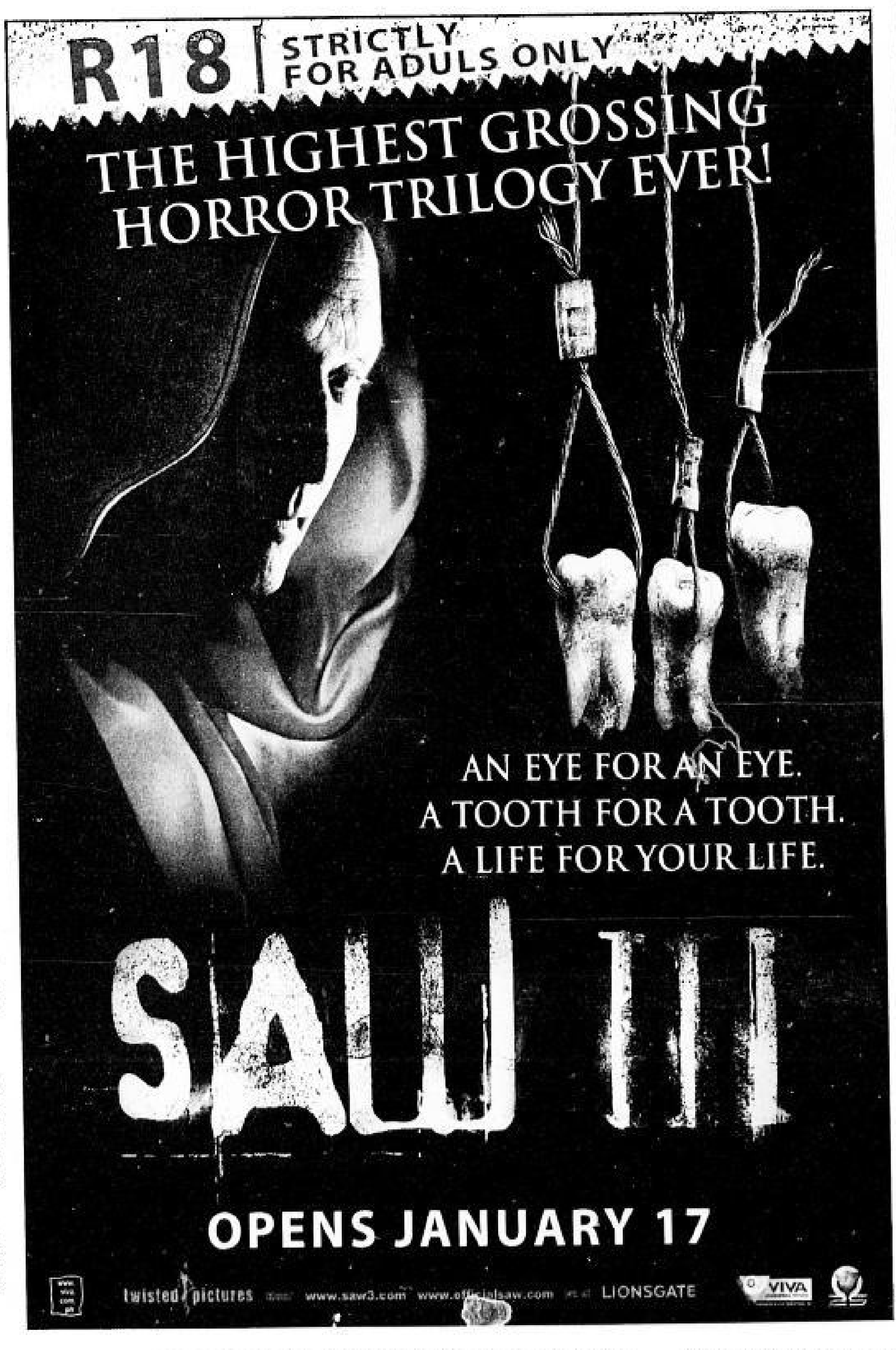
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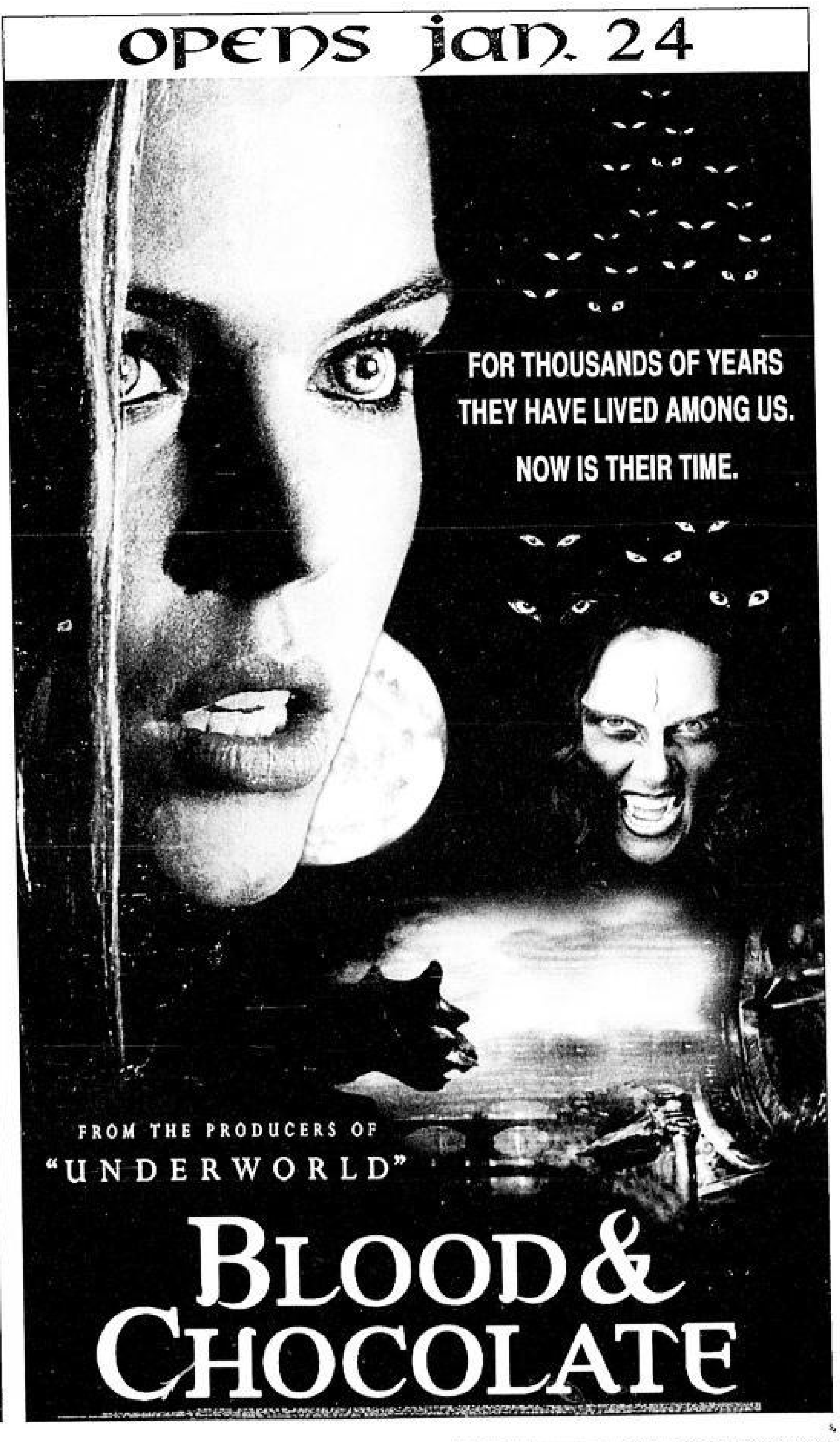
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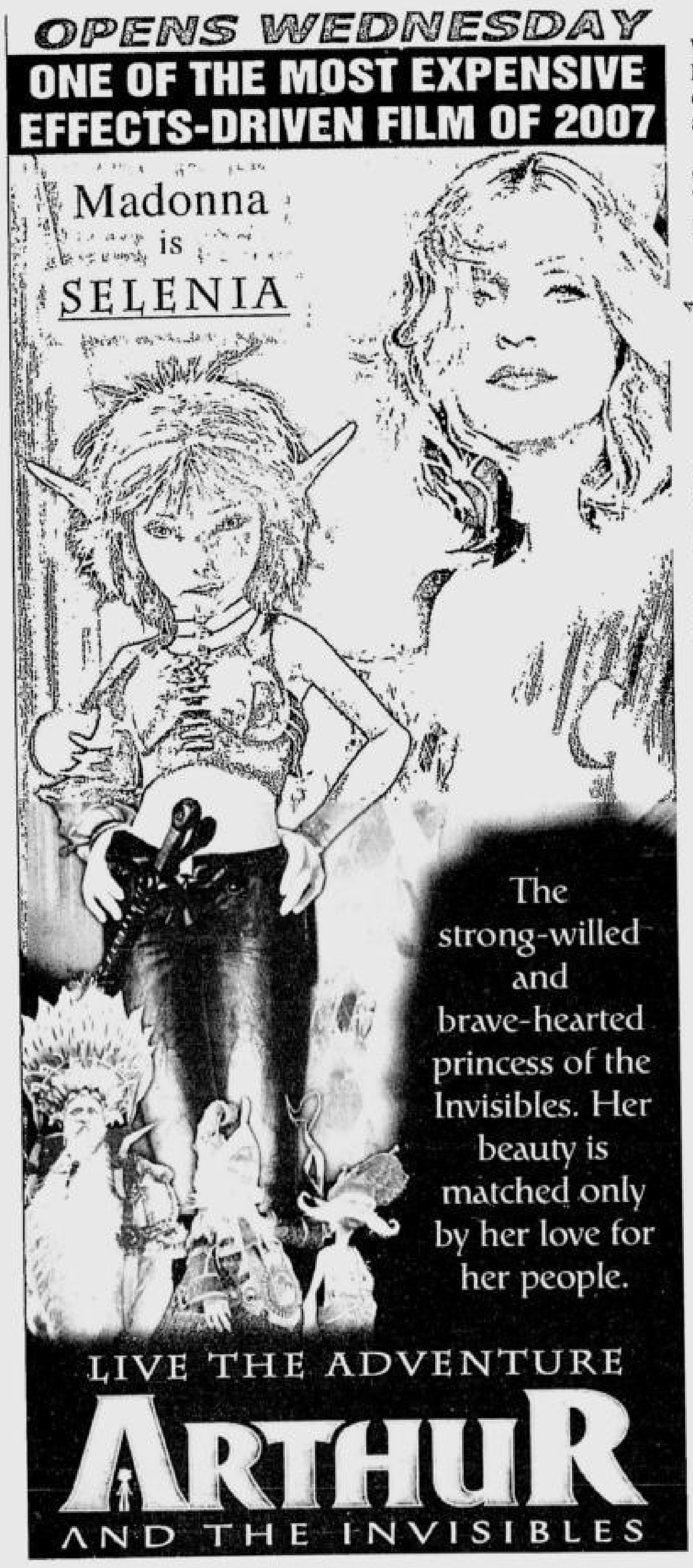
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‘Maxi’ grows up ... and viewers suggest reh

RUSHES

WHO’S THAT BOY? THAT’S Nathan Lopez, star of “Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros,” all grown up at 15.

Lopez is now a cast member of the ABS-CBN soap opera, “Sana Maulit Muli,” where he plays Kim Chiu’s best friend.

Nathan plays the character Romeo Bato—a typical teener who’s “gay in school, but straight at home.”

For whatever it’s worth, the guy ends up with the most interestingly named gay characters.

NATHAN LOPEZ

Doñas at the Big Dome

Movie Queen Amalia Fuentes made one of her very rare public appearances at the birthday bash of Megastar Sharon Cuneta on Jan. 9 at the Araneta Coliseum.

La Amalia, who played mom to Sharon in the 1982 movie “My Only Love,” says the singer-actress is one of her “favorite screen daughters.”

“We text each other often. She calls me Mama and I call her *anak*,” Amalia told Rushes.

Thus feeling motherly, Doña Nena said hello, of course, to Sha’s real-life mom, Elaine Gamboa-Cuneta.

Duet/dialogue

Speaking of the birthday show ...

When Mega sang a duet with grown-up daughter KC Concepcion, the mom ended up in tears.

Seems the lyrics of the song, “Wind Beneath My Wings,” hit too close to home. For the spectators, it was like hearing the two of them conduct a private conversation—in front of 15,000 people.

Is she drunk?

NEW YORK—“American Idol” judge Paula Abdul canceled media interviews on Friday as an online video emerged of the television star slurring and gesticulating her way through a TV interview a day earlier.

Some viewers of the footage posted on the popular online video site YouTube.com suggested she should head into rehab because it appeared she had been drinking. Abdul’s spokesman, Jeff Ballard, denied she was under the influence of alcohol or was on some kind of medication and said Abdul never drank.

Ballard said the interview was one of the last in a string of question-and-answer sessions she had done over two hours on Thursday ahead of a new season of “American Idol,” debuting this week on Fox.

“She was exhausted,” said Ballard. “She was sitting in a room with just a camera and a mic on, and the controllers dropped the sound twice, which is why she rolled her eyes.”

Reuters

Madonna: More adoptions!

NEW YORK—Madonna has urged more people to adopt children from Africa, sidestepping comments by actress and fellow adoptive mother Angelina Jolie about only adopting from countries with clearly defined adoption laws.

KC Concepcion and Sharon Cuneta
AUGUST DE LA CRUZ

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	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
G1 GLORIETTA 1	BLOOD DIAMOND	ROB-B-HOOD	ERAGON	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM			
G4 GLORIETTA 4	ERAGON	KASAL, KASALI, KASALO	THX NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM GUARANTEED SEATS	GRIFFIN & PHOENIX	ROB-B-HOOD	ERAGON	BLOOD DIAMOND
GB1 GREENBELT 1	BLOOD DIAMOND	ERAGON					
GB3 GREENBELT 3	THX ERAGON GUARANTEED SEATS	THX NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM GUARANTEED SEATS	ROB-B-HOOD GUARANTEED SEATS	GRIFFIN & PHOENIX GUARANTEED SEATS	BLOOD DIAMOND GUARANTEED SEATS		
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	THX NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM GUARANTEED SEATS	BLOOD DIAMOND	ERAGON	GRIFFIN & PHOENIX	ROB-B-HOOD		
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	ERAGON	BLOOD DIAMOND	ROB-B-HOOD			
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	KASAL KASALI KASALO	ROB-B-HOOD	BLOOD DIAMOND	ERAGON		

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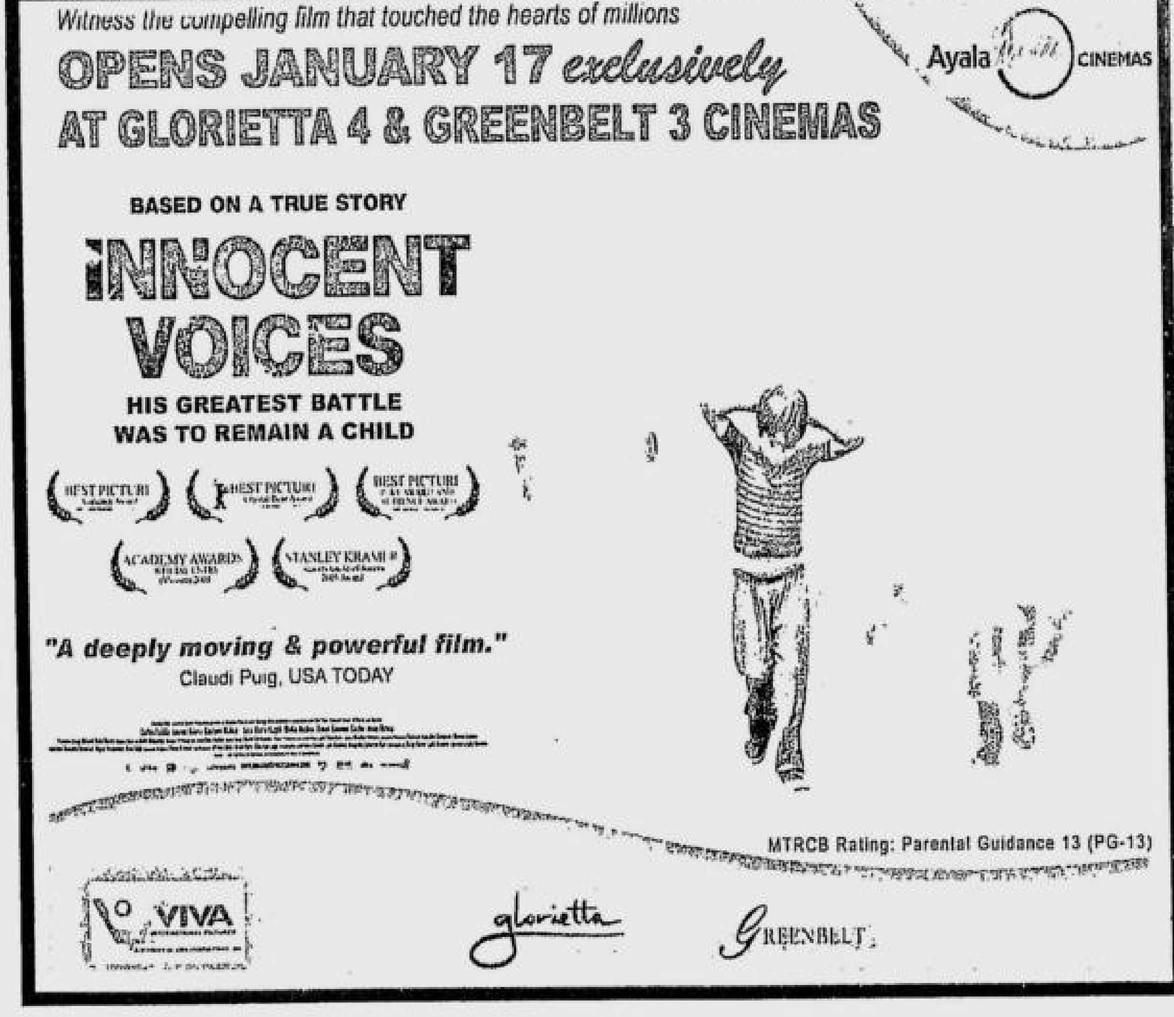
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TAINMENT

ab for Paula Abdul

AMALIA Fuentes and Elaine Cuneta
UGUST DE LA CRUZ

adonna, 48, who is in the
l processes of adopting a 1-
-old boy from Malawi, was
ised by adoption groups last
of using her celebrity status
vpass laws about foreigners
pting from Malawi.
he also faced criticism last week from Jolie, who has adopted children from Cambodia and Ethiopia. Jolie said in a magazine interview she would have steered clear of adopting from a country where there was no legal framework for adoption.

But Madonna said she saw what she was doing as "saving a life," in spite of hazy laws. *Reuters*

Cheated of millions

NEW YORK— Singer Toni Braxton has sued her former personal manager, saying he owes her at least $10 million for dirty dealing that caused her to abandon a long relationship with Arista Records for the manager's own record label.

In March 2003, Braxton ended the business relationship she had begun with Arista in 1991, when she signed a contract that led to her 1993 debut album "Toni Braxton." That recording rose to No. 1 on the "Billboard 200" chart and sold more than 10 million albums worldwide.

Braxton received the Grammy Award for best new artist in 1993, and won Grammys that year and the next for best female R&B vocal performance.

The singer said Hankerson duped her into signing a multi-album deal with his label, only to deprive the singer of her rights under the recording agreement by failing to send her accounting statements and by lying about deals he had made. *AP*

THE LETTERMEN—Mark Preston, Tony Butala and Donovan Tea—looking happy to be back in the Philippines, sign their star at the Araneta Coliseum Walk of Fame before their concert on Friday. AUGUST DE LA CRUZ

RY VALENCIANO, Unicef National Ambassador, shows his
lin pump during a performance for Typhoon Reming victims
ne Tabon Elementary School evacuation center in Daraga,
y. "I've also faced death many times," Gary said. "But I
d before you now to say that there is hope."

ROUNDUP

Critics' Awards winners

SANTA MONICA, California—"LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE," the heartwarming story about family dysfunction, and the musical "Dreamgirls," led winners at the 12th annual Critics' Choice Awards.

Both films earned four awards on Friday night, although "The Departed" took home top prizes for best picture and best director.

"Little Miss Sunshine" won for best acting ensemble, best young actress for Abigail Breslin, best young actor for Paul Dano and best writer for Michael Arndt.

Eddie Murphy and Jennifer Hudson of "Dreamgirls" earned honors in the best supporting actor/actress categories. The film also earned an award for best soundtrack, while Beyonce won for best song for "Listen."

Helen Mirren, for her portrayal of Queen Elizabeth II in "The Queen," earned the best actress nod. Forest Whitaker won best actor for "The Last King of Scotland."

'Babel,' 'Borat' nods

LOS ANGELES—Gritty drama "Babel" and smash-hit comedy "Borat" were named among the nominees for the Writers Guild of America awards here Thursday.

In the best original screenplay category, Oscars hopeful "Babel" was named alongside quirky comedy "Little Miss Sunshine," British royal drama "The Queen," Will Ferrell's comedy "Stranger than Fiction" and "United 93" about the attacks of September 11, 2001.

"Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan" was the standout nominee in the best adapted screenplay category.

The spoof documentary charts the journey across America of a fictional blundering Kazakh journalist. It was named alongside "The Departed," "The Devil Wears Prada," "Little Children" and "Thank You for Smoking." *AFP*

'I Didn't Know That'

National Geographic Channel's "I Didn't Know That" provides a look at the science behind ordinary items, from airbags to tea bags, toothpaste to tea and condoms to crash helmets.

Industrial scientists and presenters Jonny Philips and Richard Ambrose also slice open everyday objects like plasma TVs to see how they work. The series airs Saturdays at 8 p.m.

'Stranger Than Fiction'

"Stranger Than Fiction," a comedy about taking the life you have and making it the one you've always wanted, will be shown soon exclusively at Ayala Malls Cinemas (Glorietta 4 and Greenbelt 3).

Directed by Marc Foster, the film stars Will Ferrell, Emma Thompson, Dustin Hoffman, Maggie Gyllenhaal and Queen Latifah.

IRS agent Harold Crick (Ferrell) hears a female voice narrating his every action, thought and feeling in detail.

When the voice declares that he is facing imminent death, Harold realizes he must find out who is writing his story and persuade her to change the ending.

Kapamilya Channel

Kapamilya Channel, the newest channel in TFC Direct!, showcases the best of ABS-CBN classics from "Maalaala Mo Kaya Classics" and "Star Drama Presents" to "Goin' Bananas," "Abangan Ang Susunod na Kabanata" and "Chika Chika Chicks."

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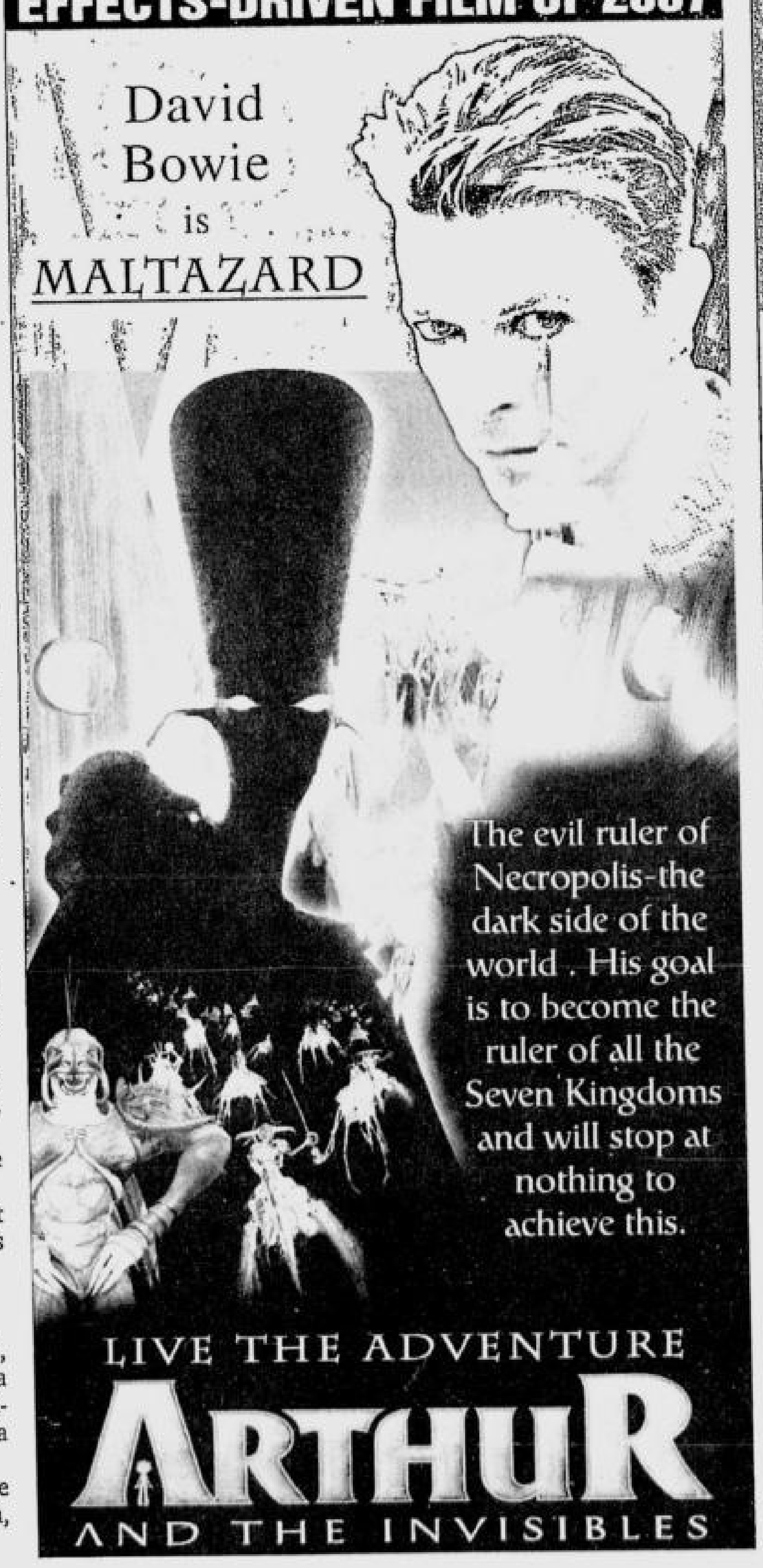
2	ERAGON 1:00, 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 11:00 G
3	BLOOD DIAMOND 1:55, 5:05, 8:15, 11:10 R-13
4	GRIFFIN & PHOENIX 1:20, 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00 PG-13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1 ERAGON • THX 2:15 4:40 7:05 9:30	6 MANO PO 12:00 2:30 5:00
2 BLOOD DIAMOND 1:30 4:20 7:10 10:00	7 GRIFFIN AND PHOENIX 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM 12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00	8 ENTENG KABISOTE 3 12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00
4 ERAGON 12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00	9 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO 12:40 2:55 5:10 7:25 9:40
5 ROB-B-HOOD 12.00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00	10 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8 1:20 4:10 7:00 9:50

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 ERAGON	10:20 12:30 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
2 GRIFFIN AND PHOENIX 12:30 2.50 5:10 7:30 9:50	5 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO 10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00
3 BLOOD DIAMOND 10:10 1.05 4.00 6:55 9:50	6 ROB-B-HOOD 10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3 10:30 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00	7 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM Sneak Preview

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 GRIFFIN AND PHOENIX 11:10 1:40 4:10 6.40 9:10	5 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8 1:20 4:00 6:40 9:00
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3 11:25 1:55 4:25 6:55 9:20	6 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM Sneak Preview
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO 11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10	7 ERAGON 12:00 2:15 4:30 6:45 9:00
4 ROB-B-HOOD 12:50 3:35 6:20 9:05	8 BLOOD DIAMOND 11:20 2:30 5:40 9:00

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 ERAGON	4 KAMASUTRA 3
2 BLOOD DIAMOND	5 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 ROB-B-HOOD	6 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

PIONEER 687-5378

1 ERAGON 1:05 3.30 5:55 8:20	3 ROB-B-HOOD 12:50 3:20 5:50 8:20
2 BLOOD DIAMOND 12 05 2 55 5 45 8 35	4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM Sneak Preview

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2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM Sneak Preview	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 LIGALIG	3 KAMASUTRA 3
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO	4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 ROB-B-HOOD	5 ROB-B-HOOD

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1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM Sneak Preview	1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 ROB-B-HOOD	2 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL 8
3 ERAGON	3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 KAMASUTRA 3	4 NIGHT MUSEUM Sneak Preview
5 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO	

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2 BLOOD DIAMOND	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM Sneak Preview	3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 ERAGON	4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 ROB-B-HOOD	5 BLOOD DIAMOND
6 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO	6 ERAGON

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1 ERAGON	1 ERAGON
2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO	2 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
3 ERAGON	3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
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Tale of the MMFF box office: 'Kasal' edges out 'Enteng'

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

THE TALE OF THE MMFF BOX office isn't limited to the photo-finish news of "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo" edging out previous film fest frontrunner "Enteng Kabisote" at the tills, P139 million to P128 million.

There is much more to infer from the festival's other figures, which placed "Shake, Rattle & Roll 8" third with P57 million, followed by "Matakot ka sa Karma" with P23 million; "Mano Po 5" with P22 million; "Super Noypi" with P19 million; Zsazsa Zaturnah" with P11 million, "Ligalig" with P7.96 million and "Tatlong Baraha" with P3.96 million.

These figures indicate that only three films earned really big bucks during the festival—"Kasal," "Enteng" and "Shake."

"Karma's" P23 million wasn't bad, but it suggested that **Gretchen Barretto**'s big-screen comeback didn't excite viewers as much as expected.

"Mano Po," at P22 million even with the popular love team of **Angel Locsin** and **Richard Gutirrez** on board, is another underperformer. For it's part, "Super Noypi" had both teen star value and special effects going for it, but its P19 million gross was rather underwhelming.

"Mano Po" and "Noypi" banked on young star power, expecting to excite and delight the huge teen audience—but hoped-for support wasn't forthcoming.

What happened? Did teen viewers opt to go for "Enteng's" out-and-out fantasy and "Kasal's" young-marrieds "dramedy" instead?

If so, that isn't welcome news for the teen and young-adult stars involved, who have racked up bigger hits in the past.

Are they slipping? Do viewers want to see something out of the ordinary at the film fest time? Whatever the reason, some rethinking of local movies' teen mystique is decidedly in order.

As for "Zsazsa Zaturnah," its P11 million gross suggests that gay camp no longer tickles moviegoers' fancy. It's been many years since "Facifica Falayfay," after all—and **Rustom Padilla** is cross-dressing **Dolphy**'s pale shadow.

Cesar Monatano's psycho-thriller, "Ligalig," barely scraped by, but the bottom of the barrel belonged to **Lito Lapid**'s comeback starrer, "Tatlong Baraha," which should tell him a thing or two about the current level of his popularity.

Another relevant conclusion is that today's film fans are no longer turned on by old-format actioners—so, keep up with the changing movie times, everyone!

Other possibly plausible insights: The chiller-thriller fad (as represented by "Shake," "Karma" and "Ligalig") isn't as hot as it used to be—so, cool it, people.

Mother Lily's movies generally didn't do as well as expected.

"Enteng" is still doing swimmingly well, but older movie series like "Shake" and "Mano Po" appear to have run out of steam. Is it time for them to be out out of pasture?

'Night at the Museum'

The latest **Ben Stiller** starrer, "Night at the Museum," is a hit in the States, and will have sneak previews locally today and tomorrow in Metro Manila, Pampanga, Baguio, Lucena and Cebu theaters. In the fun-filled comedy, Stiller plays a security guard at the Natural History Museum who witnesses the venue's primeval beasts and icons come magically to life—as havoc ensues!

On MGM Channel

Jan. 19 at 9 p.m., "Untamed Heart" with **Christian Slater** and **Marissa Tomei**. Jan. 20 at 8 p.m., "The Mighty Quinn" with **Denzel Washington**. Jan. 21 at 9 p.m., "A Dry White Season" with **Donald Sutherland** and **Marlon Brando**.

'Now Is the Time'

Carrying on its tradition of globally relevant music, Delirious? returns with the DVD-CD album, "Now Is the Time: Live at Willow Creek." Its 15 tracks of inspiring worship music are complemented by a 30-minute documentary about the band.

'Innocent Voices'

"Innocent Voices," the heart-wrenching true-to-life story of child soldiers in El Salvador, will be shown exclusively at Glorietta 4 and Greenbelt 3 starting Jan. 17. The acclaimed film won the Best Picture in the 2005 Berlin Film Festival.

Critics rave: "**Luis Mandoki** has crafted a raw, powerful portrait of childhood spent in a war zone ... The images are harrowing ... The lead child actor has an earnest, natural presence that lends an almost documentary-style realism to his character's plight."

Gong Li, desperate empress in 'Curse'

GONG LI HAS BEEN CALLED China's Greta Garbo, and the similarities are obvious.

Like the legendary Swedish actress, she has an almost otherworldly beauty and a remarkable acting range.

Also like Garbo, Gong is an intensely private woman. She rose to prominence at the age of 22 in films like "Red Sorghum" and "Raise the Red Lantern," both directed by Zhang Yimou ("Hero," "House of Flying Daggers").

TAKE FIVE

The duo were romantically linked between the years of 1987 to 1995, but after their personal relationship ended, so did their film collaboration. Gong worked with other directors and forayed into Hollywood ("Memoirs of a Geisha," "Miami Vice").

After more than 10 years, the duo have reunited for Buena Vista International's "Curse of the Golden Flower."

What was it like working with Zhang again?

It was actually easier than before. We had this strong common goal, to make a really good film. We worked very professionally. It was a wonderful experience.

Since last working with you, Zhang has switched over to the martial arts genre. Have you kept track of his movies?

Yes, I've seen all of his films. Chinese males all love martial arts films.

Is "Curse of the Golden Flower" based on real people or events?

The story itself is based on a famous Chinese stage play by a writer named Cao Yu back in 1933. It's very famous, read and widely performed even to this day. Cao Yu is long deceased; his daughter gave Zhang Yimou the rights to make this adaptation.

So you were familiar with this play and your character beforehand?

Yes. In college, I was in the play as the character named Siphong, not the empress.

You've been playing baddie roles of late. Have you enjoyed switching gears?

I don't think my characters should be categorized as either good or bad, the villain or the heroine. I don't have much interest in performing one-dimensional characters.

Now that you've been in a few American films, do you feel more comfortable doing them?

No, it's not a big difference overall. I'm not too worried as long as I know that the director is a good director with a good script and that I can trust he will do a good job with that. Before I agree to do a film, I try to get a chance to really get to know the director and just see what he's going to be doing.

GONG LI, China's Greta Garbo

How do you feel about all the Oscar talk and awards buzz that come around every time you do a movie? Do you pay attention to it?

It's good in a sense that people are very interested in the Oscars but you know, really what's important for me is if people know who I am, if they like my films, and they think, "Oh, she's a pretty good actress and did a pretty good job." If people feel that way, then that's my real Oscar. I don't really need the statue itself. It's good enough that the moviegoers are impressed.

"Curse of the Golden Flower" opens soon in the Philippines.

Mirren expects 'weird bubble' to burst soon

LONDON—BRITISH ACTRESS Helen Mirren is a firm favorite in the race for top film awards this year, but she expects the "weird bubble" created by critical acclaim for her performance in "The Queen" to burst soon.

Although the Mirren, 61, has left it late to make a splash in the United States, two successful television roles followed by her portrayal of Queen Elizabeth II have put her on the map in Hollywood and New York.

She is on the Best Actress short list for a Golden Globe, and on Friday added a BAFTA—Britain's top film award—to her list of nominations.

Later this month she will learn if she is in the running for the greatest prize of all, the Oscar—it would be a major surprise if she was not.

Mirren told Reuters by telephone: "I think here in America, because I had three pieces of work that were all incredibly successful and extremely well received ... suddenly people went 'Wow, where did this woman come from?'"

In addition to "The Queen", Mirren won a Best Actress Emmy award in 2006 for television production "Elizabeth I" and has two Golden Globe nominations in the Best Actress in a mini-series category for "Elizabeth I" and "Prime Suspect."

"I'll be perfectly happy when I drop off the map as well," she said, adding that she was keen to return to the theater stage.

"Win or lose, the bubble bursts and you're back to the nitty-gritty of working. I'm honestly at my happiest in a cold rehearsal room with my polystyrene cup of tea."

Directed by Stephen Frears, "The Queen" won 10 BAFTA nominations, one ahead of James Bond film "Casino Royale."

Explaining the success of "The Queen," Mirren said: "We are all flawed and ambitious and foolish and spoiled; one can recognize the human side in everyone."

Mike Collett-White, Reuters

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① ERAGON
MTRCB GP
1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00
② ROB-B-HOOD
MTRCB PG-13
1:15, 4:00, 6:45, 9:35
③ BLOOD DIAMOND
MTRCB R-13
12:30, 3:40, 6:50, 10:00
④ NIGHT AT THE MUSUEM
MTRCB GP
12:20, 2:45, 5:10, 7:35, 10:00
PREMIERE THEATRE
GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
MTRCB PG-13
2:45, 5:10, 7:35, 10:00
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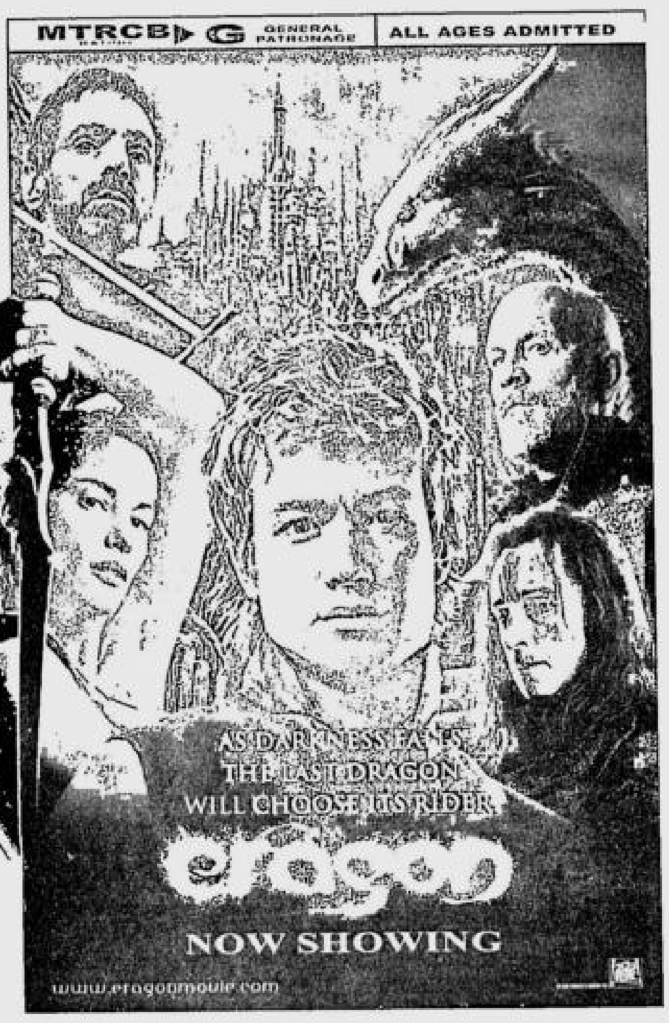

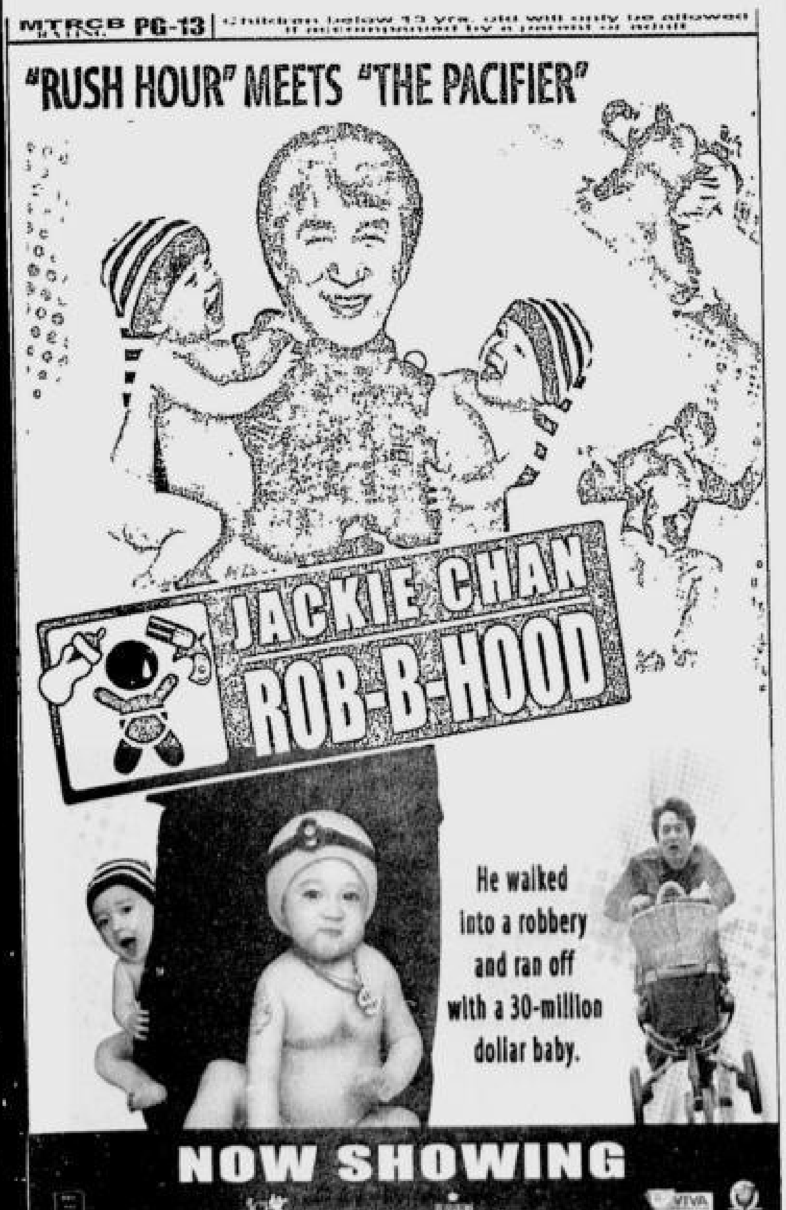
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BLOOD DIAMOND R13 2:10,5:10,8:10	ROB-B-HOOD PG13 12:35,3:05,5:35,8:05	ERAGON G 1:00,3:20,5:40, 8:00,10:20

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'Charming' was an abused child in real life

EUNICE LAGUSAD

By Nini Valera

THE CHILD ACTRESS WHO PORtrays the maltreated Charming in the GMA 7 prime time soap "Bakekang" was an abused child in real life.

Eunice Lagusad, 8, recounted to INQUIRER Entertainment in an exclusive interview that last July, her father, a former seaman, barged into their home in Gagalangin, Tondo and began throwing punches at her mother Regina.

"He jumped over the fence and entered our house," Eunice said.

"He began hitting my mother. I tried to stop him, but he hurled me against our washing machine. Then he got a knife and ran after my mother. He stuck the knife against a pillow; my mother was not hurt. But it was a horrifying experience."

That was the last time mother and daughter saw the man.

Regina explained that she never married Eunice's father, a co-worker in a fast food chain. They never even lived together, she said, adding that he had boarded a ship for an unknown destination when Eunice was only seven months old.

He's been trying to return to his daughter's life, Regina said. But Eunice set all other things aside when "Bakekang" came and she tried out for a role.

"I wanted to play the young Bakekang," said Eunice, who was called to audition at the height of typhoon Milenyo in September. "I thought that role was for me."

She ended up playing Charming, a character that was not in the original *komiks* story by Carlo J. Caparas, in which Bakekang has only one daughter, Crystal. In the TV version, Bakekang has two daughters—the pretty Crystal and the ugly Charming.

What Eunice thought would be a day's taping after she got the role turned out to be two weeks' work.

The sub-plot on Bakekang's two daughters was stretched due to overwhelming response from the viewers, who wanted to see more of Charming and her daily miseries.

Spin-off set

Her character has generated such a solid fan base that a spin-off, "Princess Charming," is set to be aired on GMA 7's afternoon block.

As in "Bakekang," Charming in "Princess Charming" is ugly—something Charming doesn't mind at all. "I know I'm not ugly," she said.

Eunice is enrolled in grade 2 of the Immaculate Concepcion Academy in Tondo, but has to take make-up classes from modules provided by a public school.

"I miss school," she confessed. "But I will not give up my job. It's what I want to do."

The money also comes in handy, she said.

Regina, claimed her daughter's earnings are deposited in a bank account. "I don't touch it," said Regina, debunking tabloid reports that the family is totally dependent on Eunice.

But Regina admitted that she had stopped working since Eunice became a regular in the cast. "I could still work," she said, "but my mind would always be on my daughter, especially when she's out taping."

For her part, Eunice would rather have her mom by her side. "I don't know what I'd do without her," she said. "I am just a child."

IndieSine opens Jan. 17 at Robinsons Galleria

THE INDEPENDENT FILMMAKers Cooperative (IFC) announces the regular operations at Robinsons Galleria of IndieSine, a theater dedicated to local alternative movies.

IFC is holding an invitational launch tomorrow at 6 p.m., with pioneers and leaders in the indie film community as guests.

These leaders are the 11 Daluyan Awardees: Ben Pinga, Virgie Moreno, Surf Reyes, Nick de Ocampo, Raymond Red, Roxlee, Tikoy Aguiluz, Mike de Leon, Mario O. Hara and Ed Cabagnot and Kidlat Tahimik.

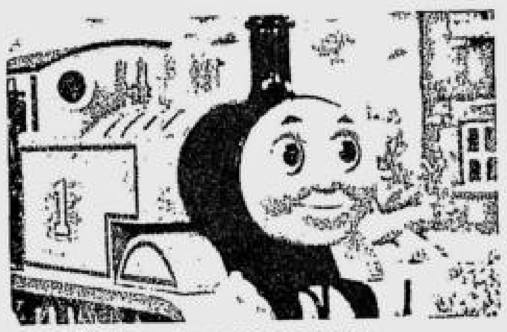
The full-length feature, "Huling Balyan ng Buhi," directed by Sherad Sanchez, opens the IndieSine launch. As such, "Balyan," 2006 Grand Prize winner of the Cinema Originals starts Bagong Agos, a week-long festival featuring some of the most talked about indie movies in the last year.

IndieSine offers regular commercial runs and festivals throughout the year. Its unique programming includes an interesting mix of alternative films new and old, experimental and genre-busting titles, both multi-awarded and obscure.

The IFC provides services to its members "from production to distribution." It is mainly a support and network system for indies who need help with their movies. All practitioners who have worked in an indie film production can apply for membership.

IFC is the short version of Philippine Independent Filmmakers Multi-purpose Cooperative.

For bulk sales and other details, Call Ramon Bayron, (0906) 253-5730.



"THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE"

Extended viewing

TEENICK BLOCK ON NICKELODEON WILL soon be running for two hours instead of one.

This will cover regular features like "Drake and Josh," "Zoey 101," "Romeo," "All That" on Mondays to Thursdays and "Ned's Declassified School Survival Guide," "Unfabulous" and "Naturally Sadie" on Fridays to Sundays.

The extended viewing hours begin from Jan. 22 at 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

On Jan. 26, TEENick also launches "Life with Derek," a new show featuring two teenagers who become siblings when their parents get married. It airs Fridays and Sundays, 8 p.m.

KID FIT

Cartoon series

Peep, a newly-hatched chick, and his bird friends, Chirp the robin and Quack the duck, explore their park surroundings and learn about basic scientific concepts such as shadows, gravity and mirrors.

"Peep and the Big Wide World," an educational series, premieres this month on Cartoon Network.

Weekdays at 10:30 p.m., watch all-new episodes of "The Pingu Show" in a new format.

Pingu is a cheeky, adorable penguin. The show follows the penguin's adventures with family and friends in the South Pole.

"Thomas the Tank Engine" continues this month with new adventures of Thomas and the hardworking transport vehicles of the Isle of Sodor, including new engines joining the crew.

The series airs weekdays, 10:45 a.m.

Bugs Bunny back

Weekends starting Jan. 20 at 2:30 p.m. are for new episodes of "Hi Hi Puffy Amiyumi."

The rockin' act of Ami and Yumi returns as their continuing round-the-world bus tour takes them to new exotic locales and encounters of a bizarre kind.

The two-hour, non-stop, break-free "Chunky Weekend Toons" features the two most famous Looney Tunes characters—Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck.

The infamous duo brings gags and slapstick humor weekends from 4 to 6 p.m.

"Power Rangers Dino Thunder" is back with a new team formed to battle a new menace.

The series airs weekdays, 2:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. starting Jan. 26th.

"HI HI PUFFY AMIYUMI"

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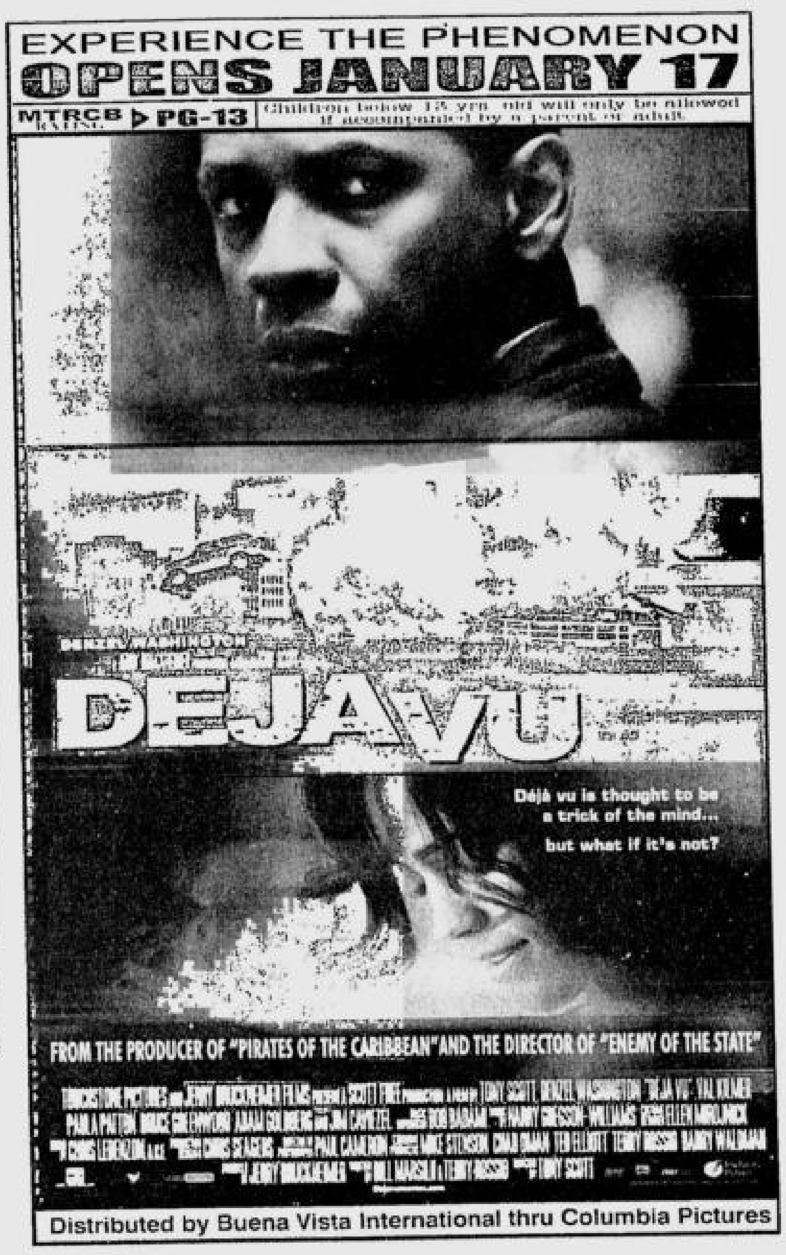

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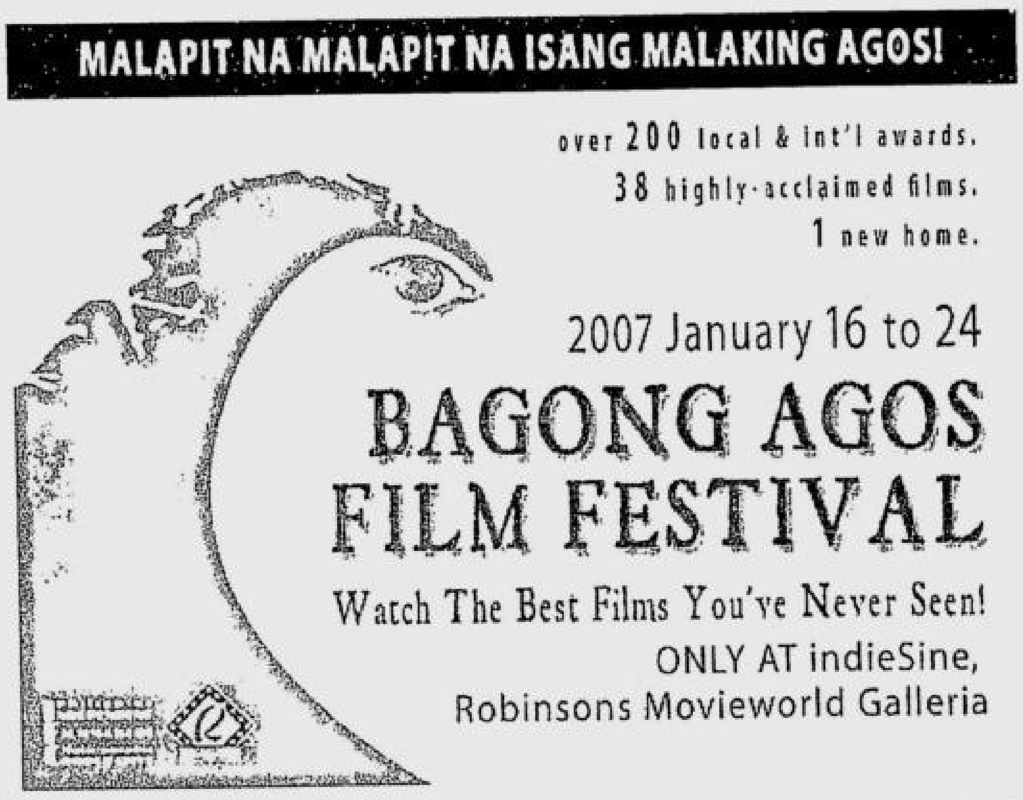

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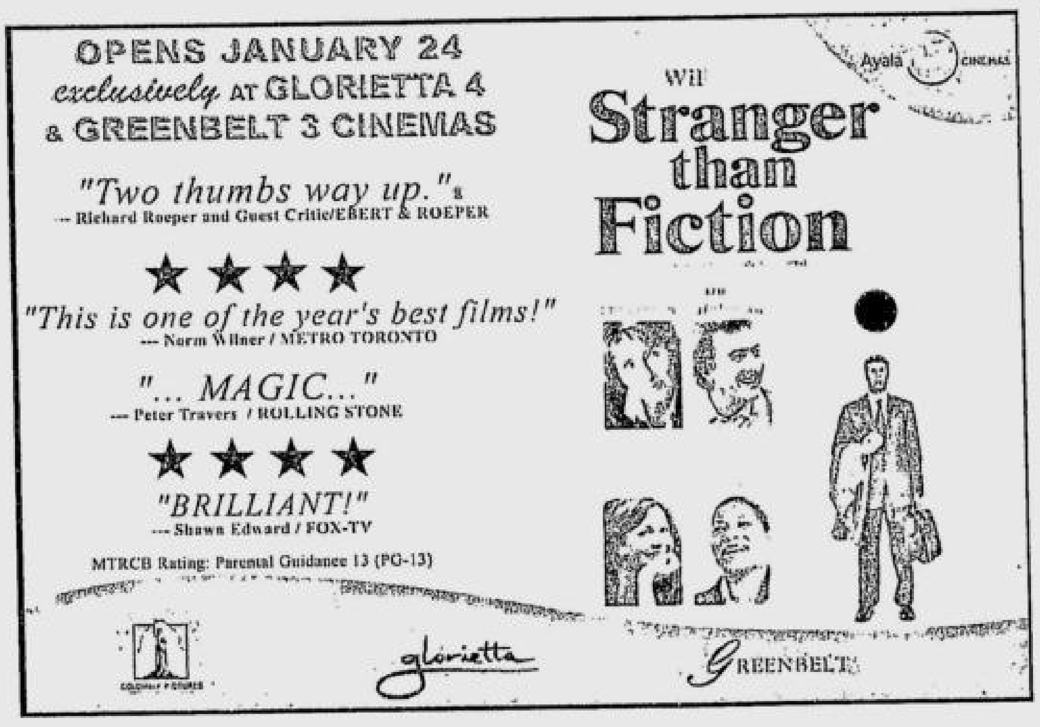

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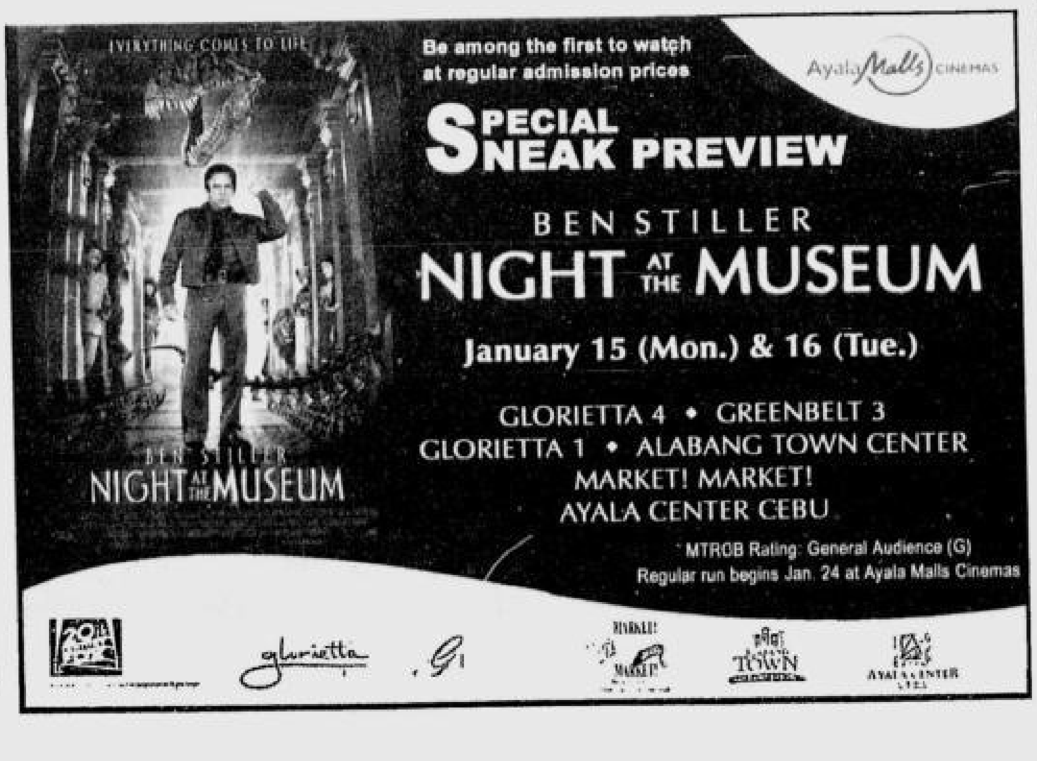

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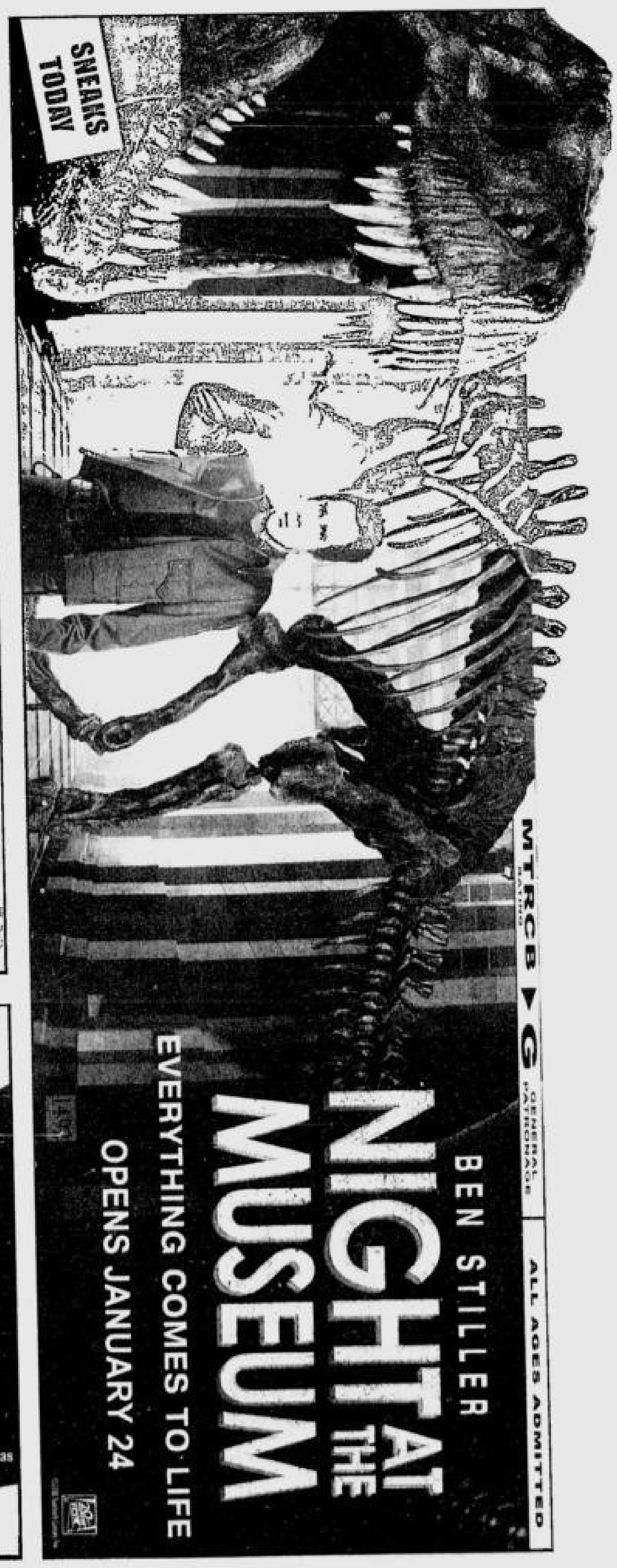

SNEAKS TODAY
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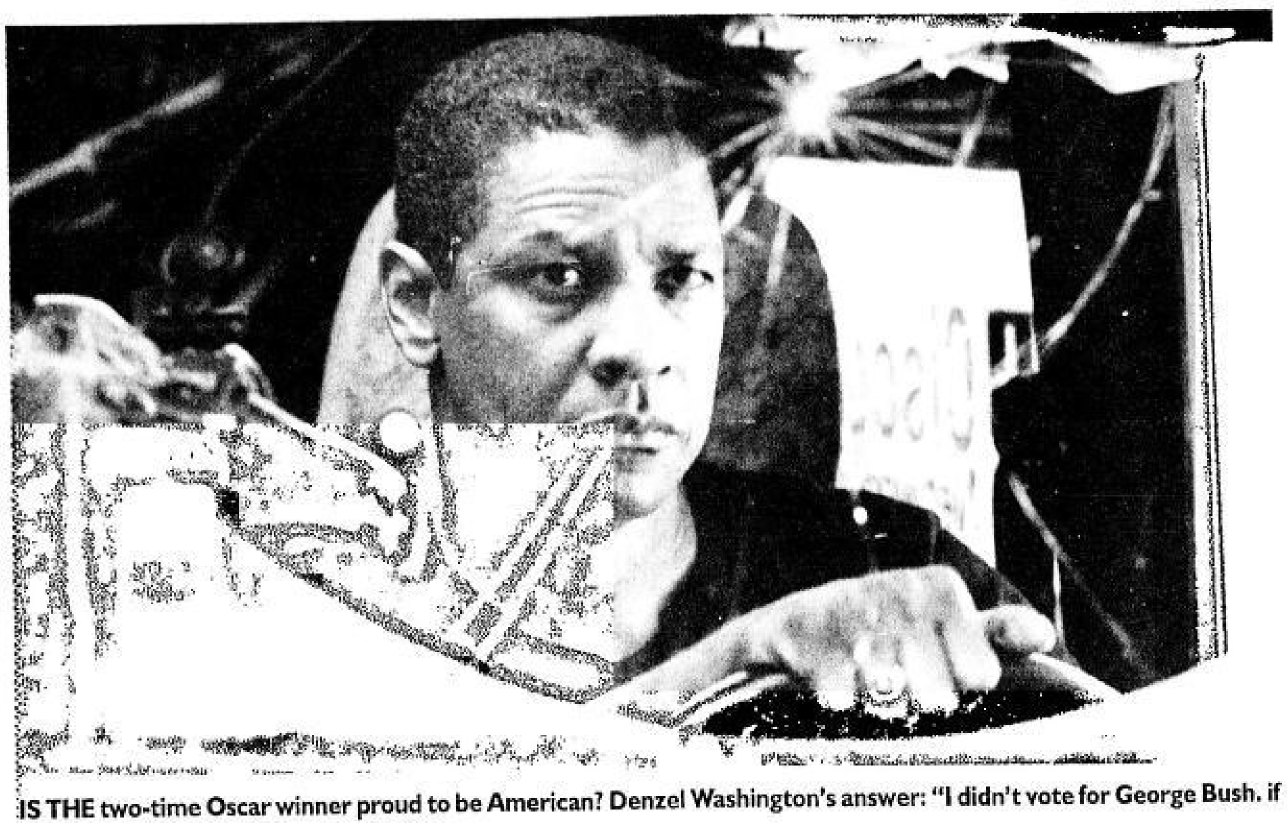


IS THE two-time Oscar winner proud to be American? Denzel Washington's answer: "I didn't vote for George Bush. if that's what you really want to know."

A Déjà view of Denzel Washington

By Janet Susan R. Nepales
Contributor

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

LOS ANGELES—"SO YOU GUYS HAVE figured out all the problems of the world?", a beaming Denzel Washington asked as he walked into a hotel room, casually dressed in a black, long-sleeved shirt and denim pants.

The two-time Oscar winner, who appears as Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) agent Doug Carlin in the action-thriller "Déjà Vu," radiated warmth and sincerity as he proceeded to answer our questions. He broke into his familiar loud and exuberant laughter when he found something amusing.

Produced by blockbuster master Jerry Bruckheimer and directed by Tony Scott ("Crimson Tide," "Man on Fire"), "Déjà Vu" tells the spine-tingling story of how an agent, who falls in love with a stranger, goes back in time using high technology to save his beloved's life.

Asked if he ever had a déjà vu moment (the familiarity of a smell, sight or sound that causes us to confuse past with present in a split second), Denzel replied: "Yes, I have. One day I got my mail and I just stood there for a while thinking somebody would drive by. And true enough, Eddie Murphy drove by and talked to me."

Big question

If he had a chance to go back in time to change something, what would that be?

"You have to give me a month to think about it," Denzel replied. "Once you change something, it affects everything. The consequences may be frustrating. But I'm thinking, it has to be something personal, really close to your heart. Like, I would like to change slavery. But then I have to ask myself which slavery? Slavery today? In Egypt? Or in Africa? And which time frame? So there are a lot of things to think of before I do that."

The film shows advanced visual surveillance tools (or what Denzel calls "spying technology") that see through buildings and homes, watch human traffic at airports and reconstruct criminal activities. "Déjà Vu," according to Denzel, adapted technology that is already being used today.

"We already have this kind of technology," he pointed out. "There are actually cameras that can look inside a building and see what people are doing. How do I feel about it? Don't ask me because I have been surveyed a long time ago. Welcome to the life of a celebrity!

Dream come true

"But to be accurate, they need your DNA or your genetic information to be able to distinguish you from the other people in the room or else it will simply come out as a bunch of people meeting."

Also starring Val Kilmer, Jim Caviezel (Jesus in Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ") and newcomer Paula Patton, "Déjà Vu," according to Denzel, is "a very bizarre love story."

"It is unusual," he described the film. "Wouldn't it be interesting if you meet someone and you get to look at four days of your life before you meet that person? It is a very interesting love story."

> 'One day I stood there thinking someone would drive by ... and Eddie Murphy did'

The lovely Paula, whom we interviewed separately, described working with Denzel as "a dream come true."

Said Paula: "Working with Denzel really made me think of that feeling of déjà vu because I immediately felt comfortable working with him and we connected immediately."

Denzel and Paula's chemistry onscreen is so strong you would think they have known each other for a long time.

"Paula has a lot of energy," Denzel said. "She brings this excitement and innocence onscreen. And that is really refreshing. Tony Scott has a good eye. He was the one who highly recommended her to me. He is right, though. Paula has innocence, warmth, and an inner and outer beauty that you just want to protect."

Devastation as setting

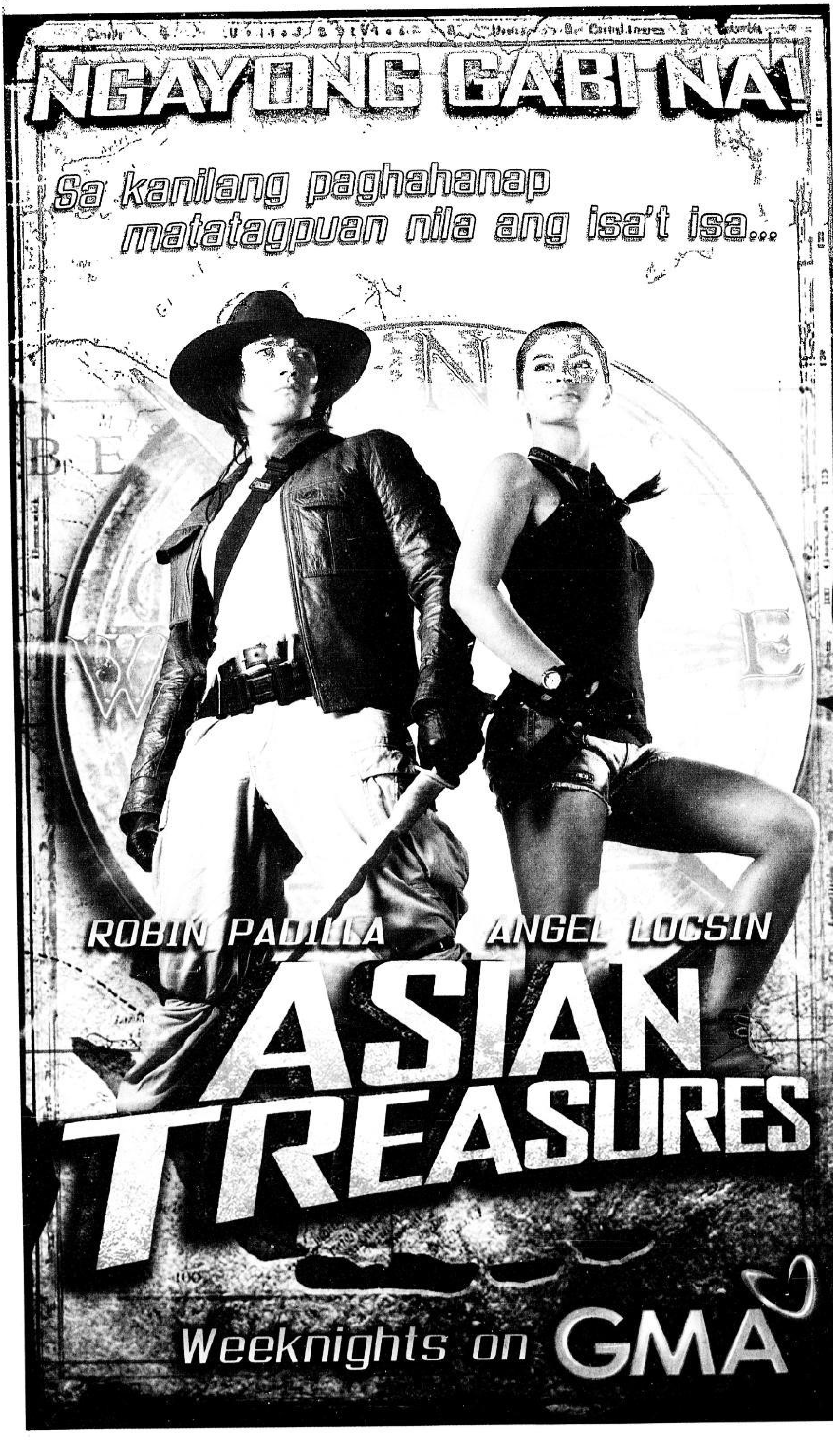
It was Denzel's idea to continue filming in New Orleans even after Hurricane Katrina hit the city. The film was already in pre-production then.

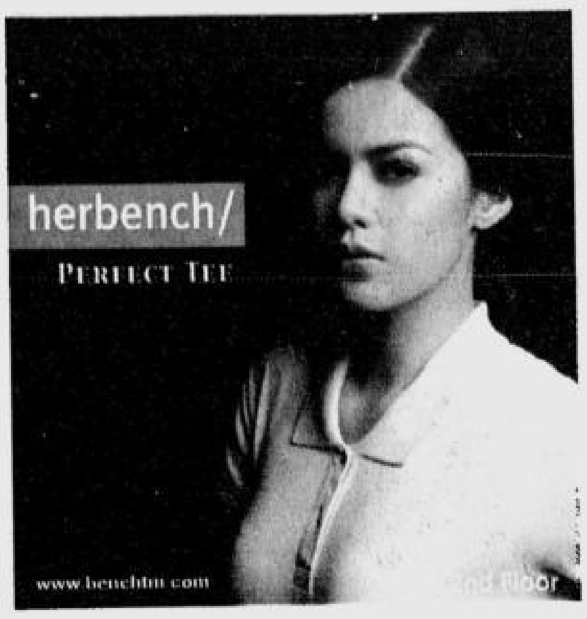
"I am happy to be a part of helping get New Orleans back on its feet," he said. "What the community experienced was overwhelming devastation and in the midst of this devastation, you see these old ladies cleaning outside their homes and trying to make everything go back to normal. People were happy because they got jobs when we continued filming over there. I went around and I saw people come up to me just to talk. You just have to listen. People were frustrated and angry and I was there to listen to their stories."

Denzel continued: "What happened in New Orleans reminded me of our responsibilities as human beings. Sometimes, it is not enough to simply give money or to just raise buildings because these victims cannot get back everything they have lost. Some of them were looking for a pair of glasses, a photograph, anything to remind them of what their lives used to be. It was a sad time and at the same time very inspiring. I actually spoke to a group of college kids and they were very enthusiastic to build their schools and go back to their classrooms. They were ready to do anything to build their city back."

Is he proud to be an American now?

"I didn't vote for George Bush, if that is what you are asking."

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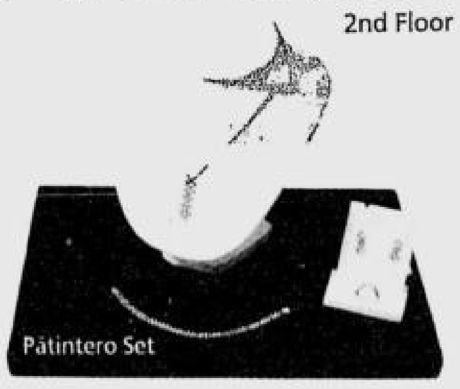
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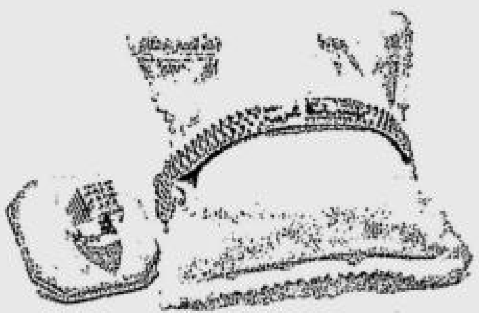

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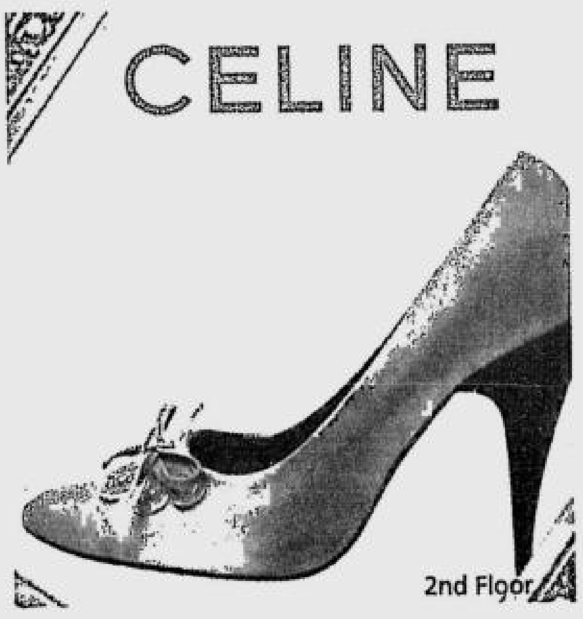
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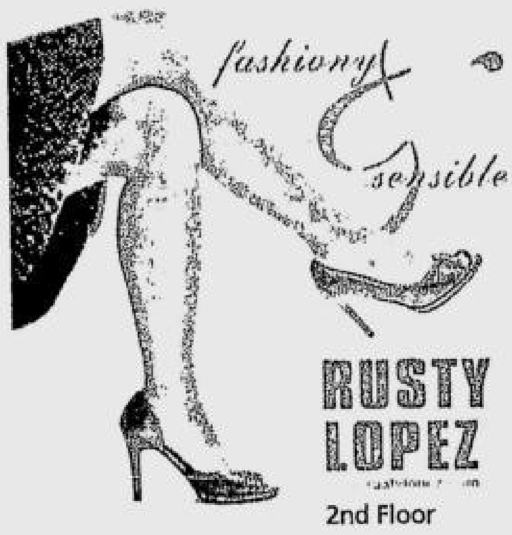
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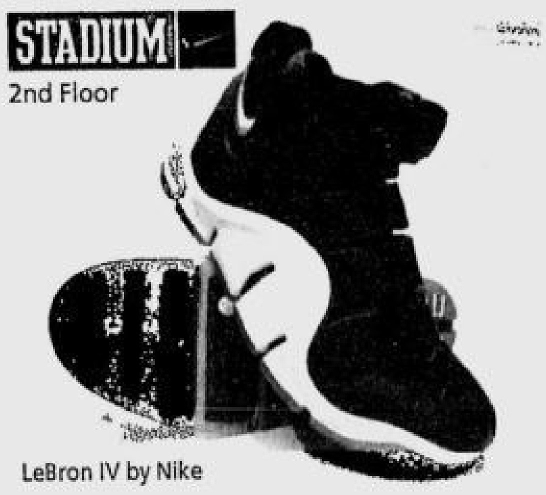

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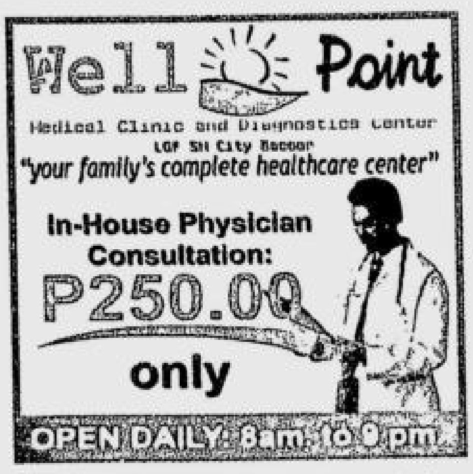

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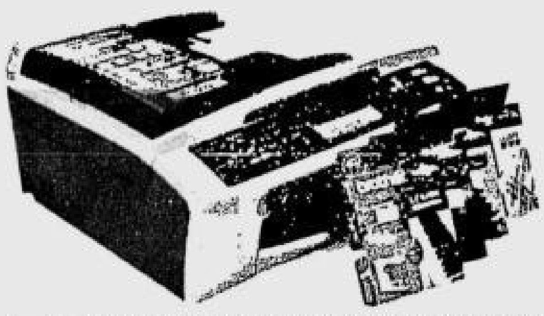

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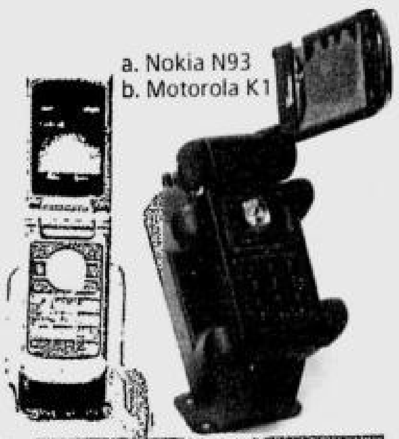

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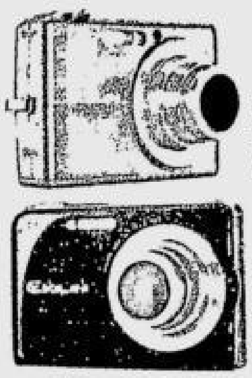

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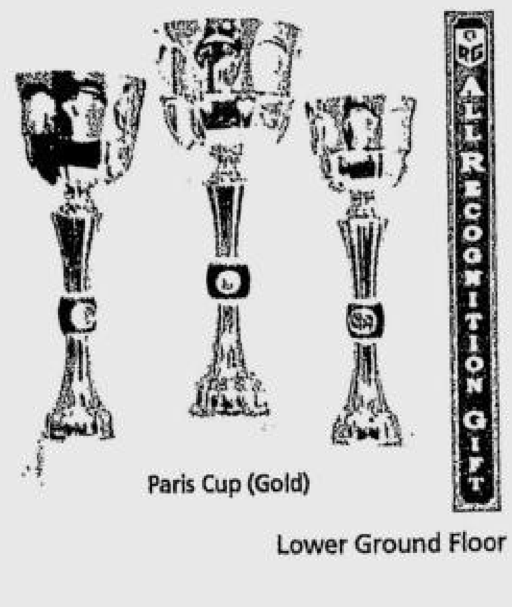
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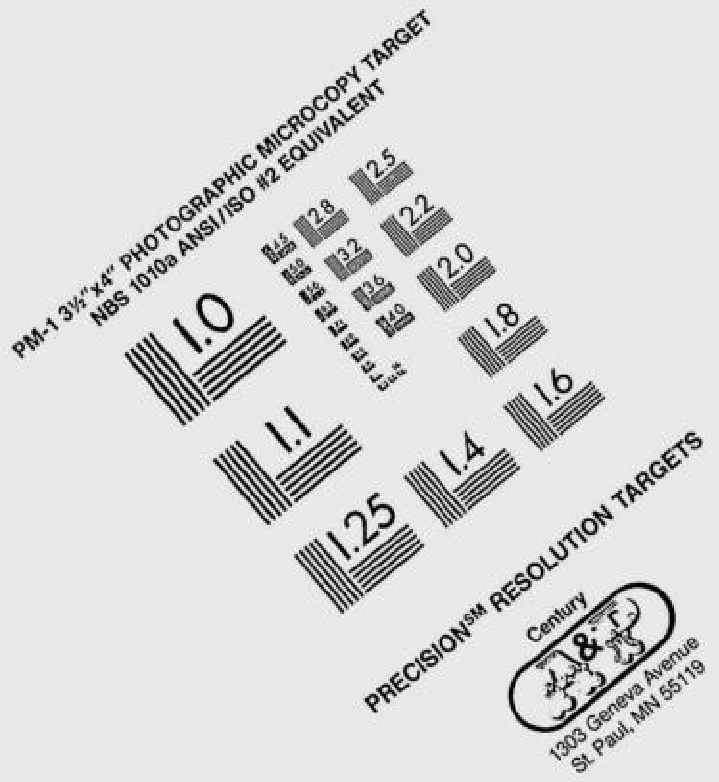
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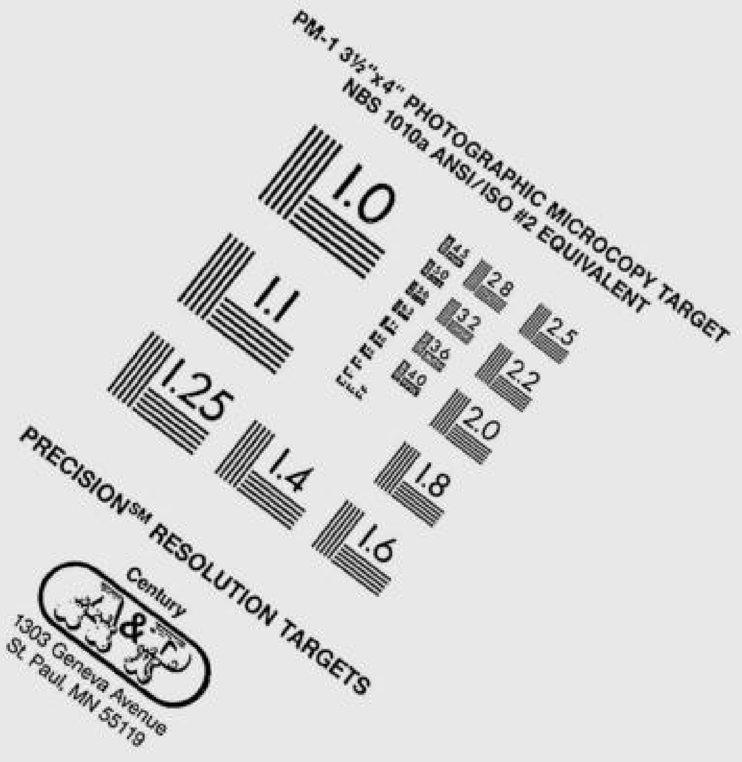
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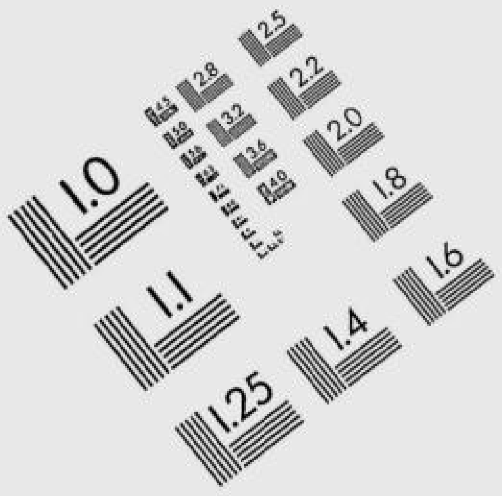
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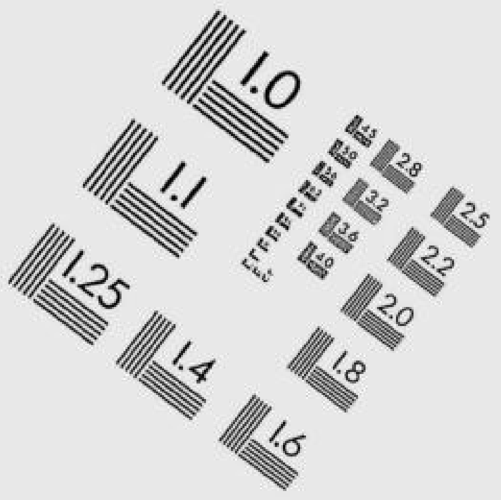
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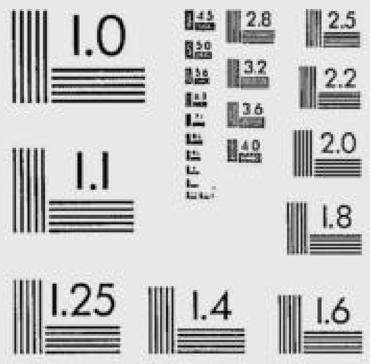
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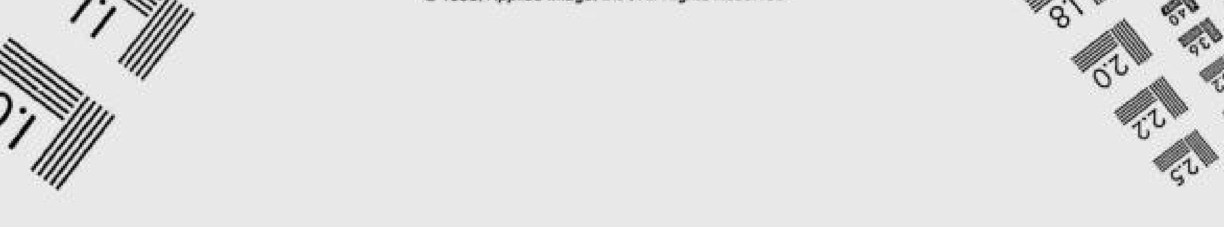

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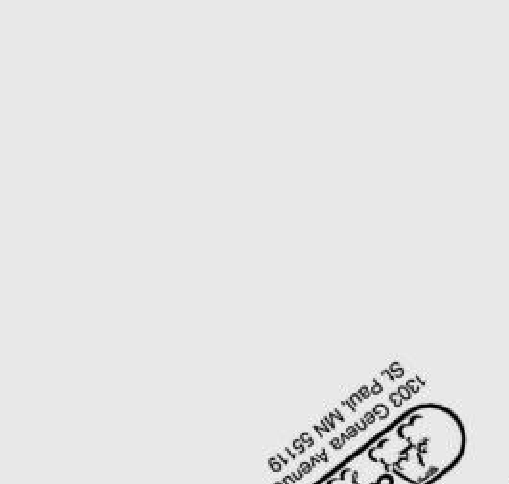
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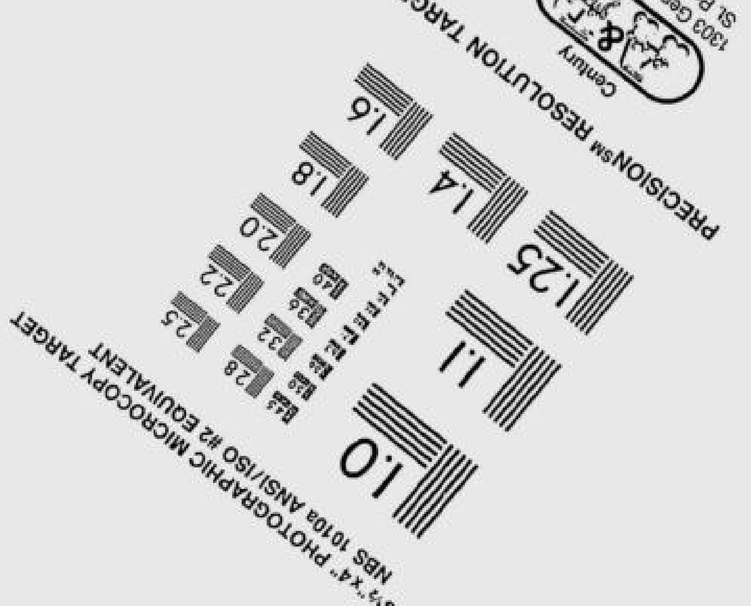
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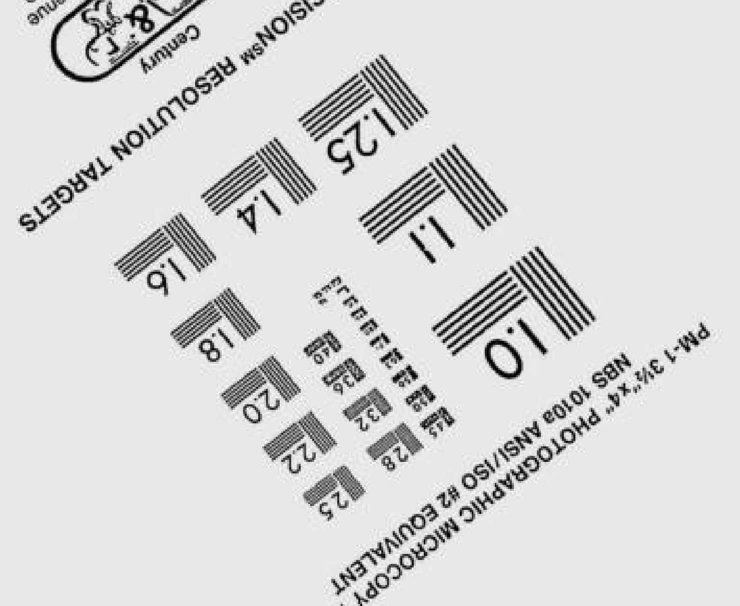
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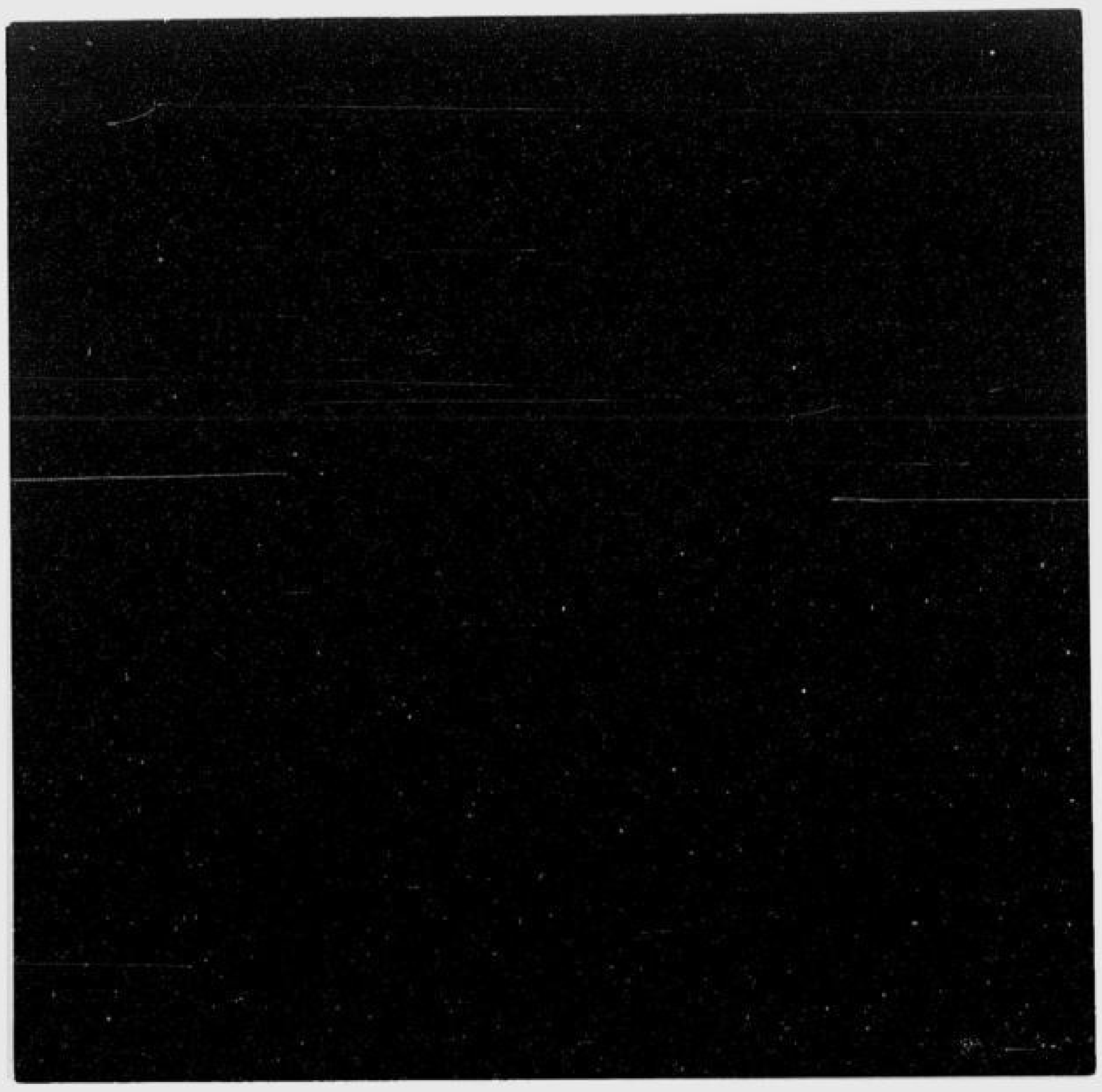

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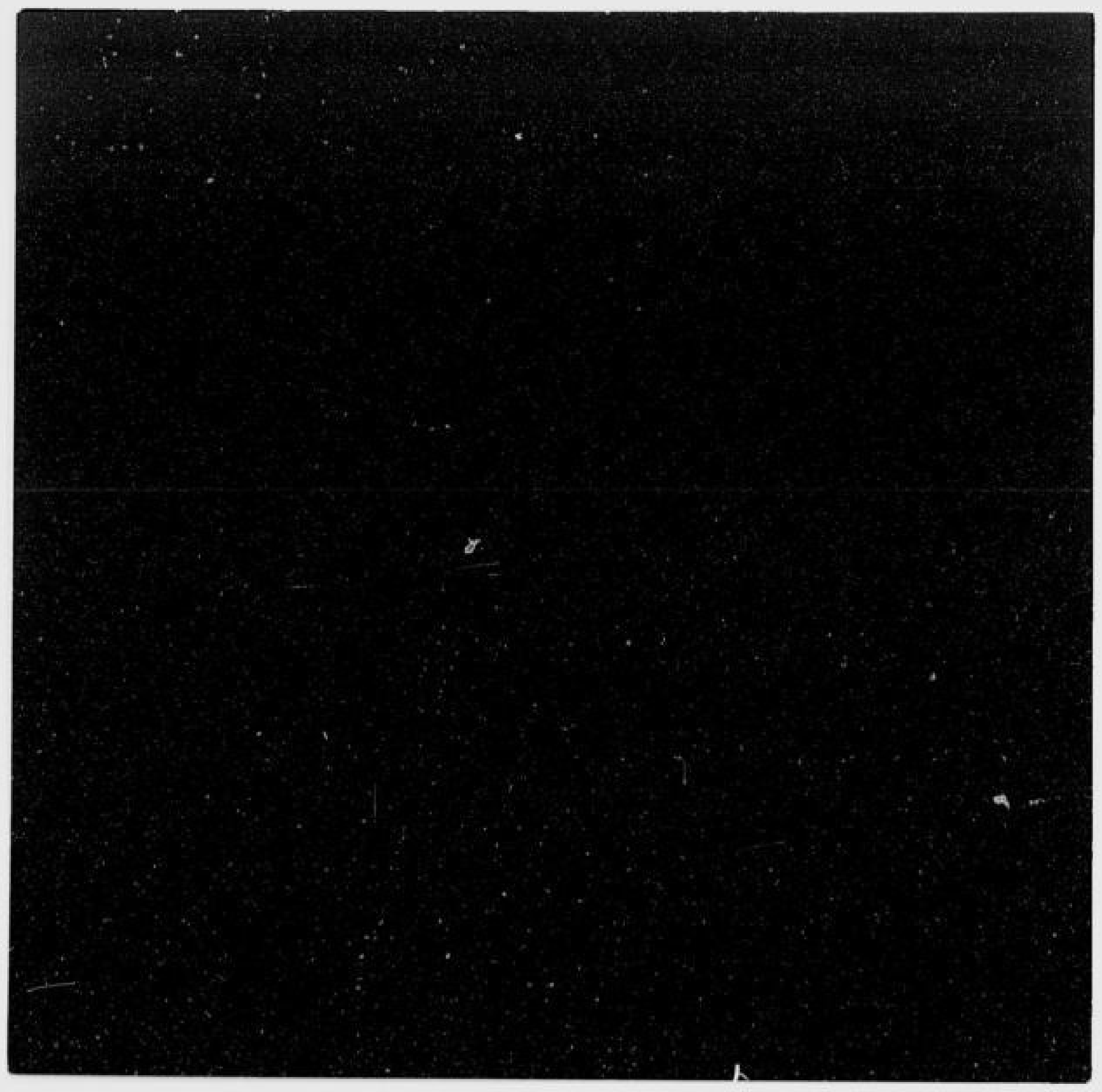

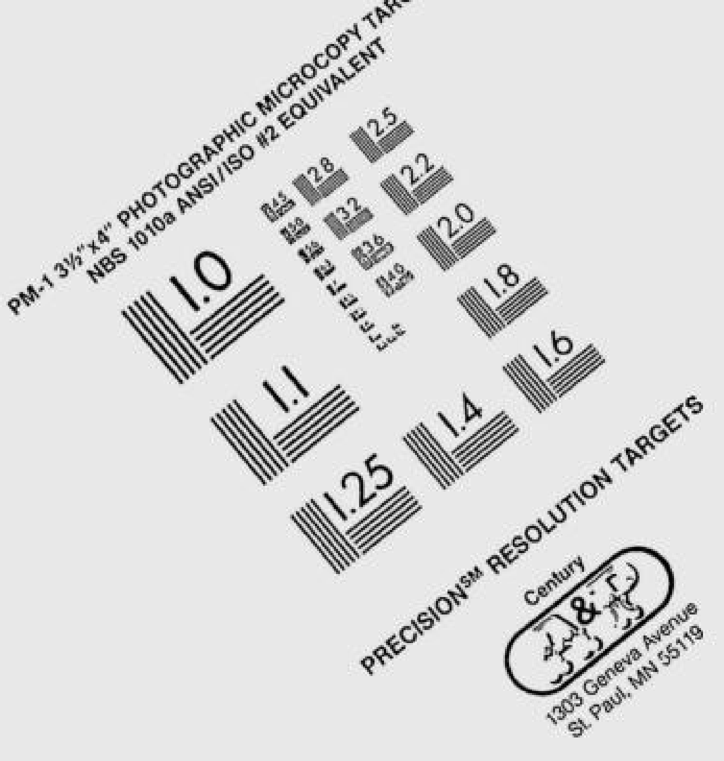
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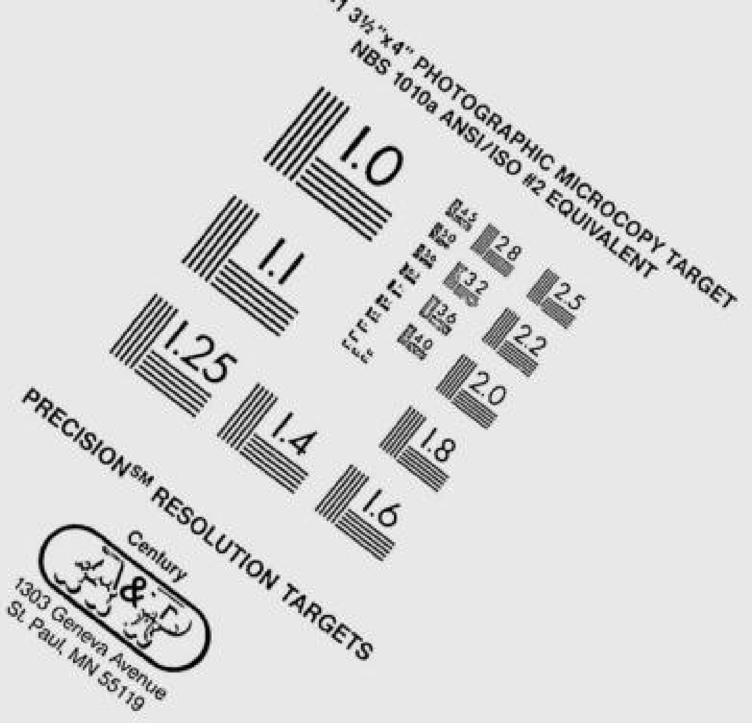
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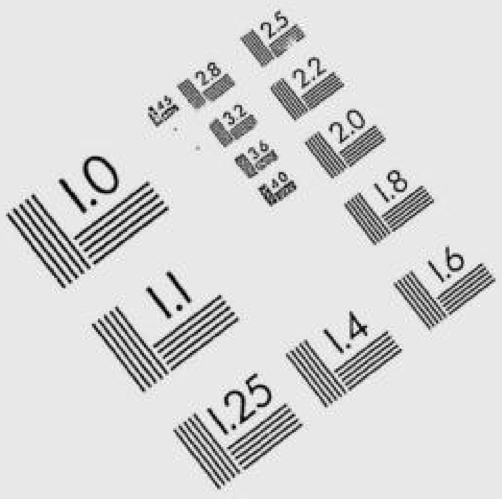
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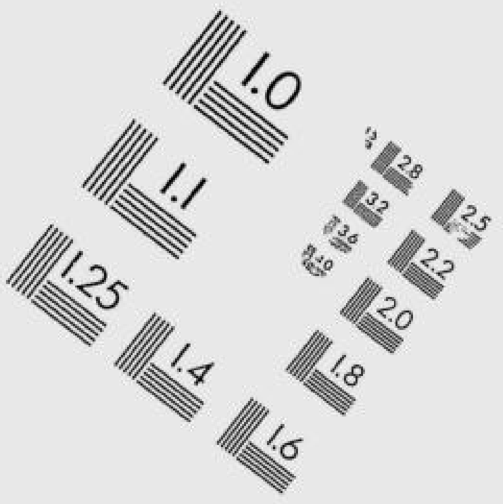
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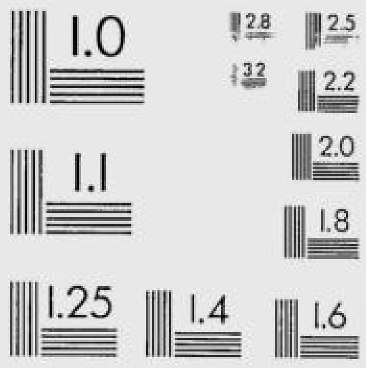
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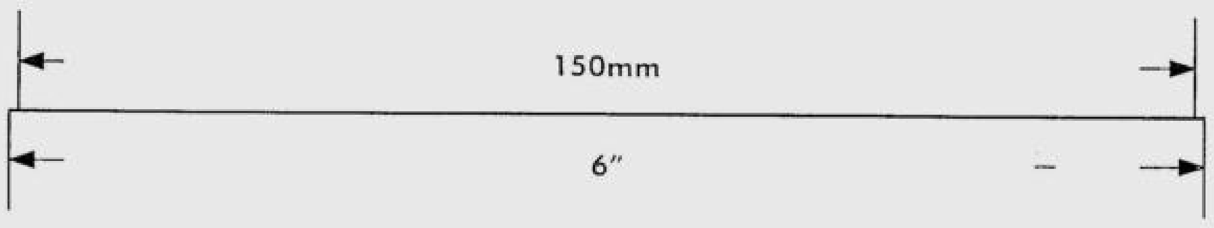

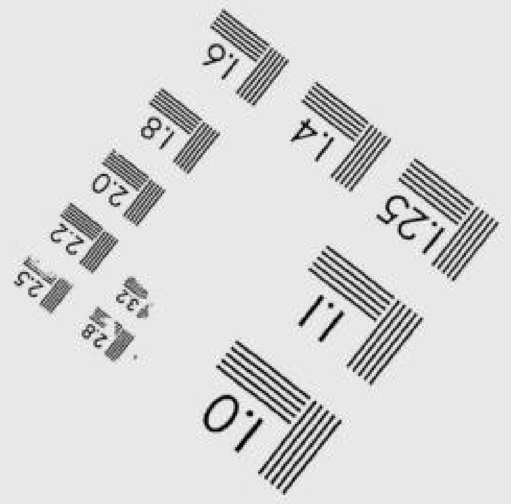
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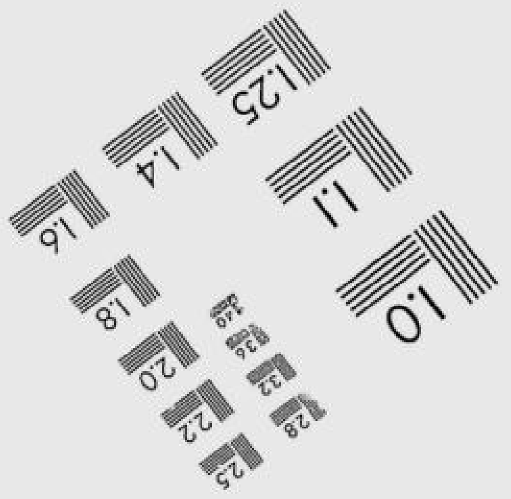
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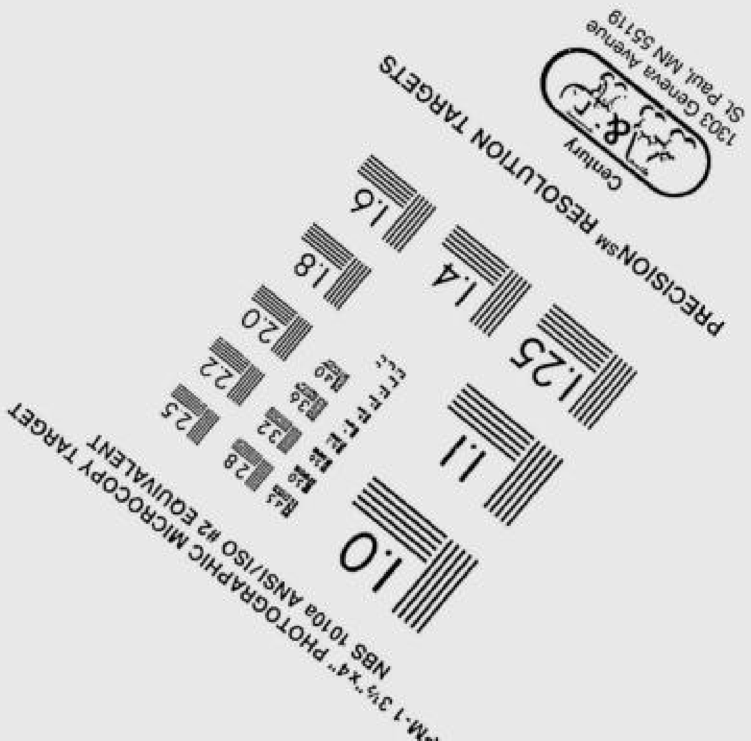
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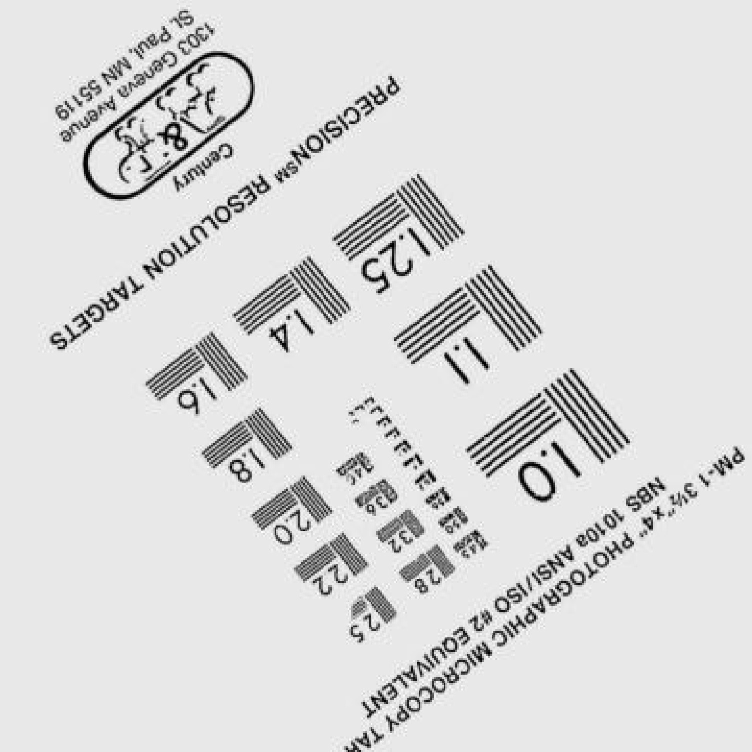
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